

An illustration of a young boy with curly brown hair, wearing a yellow raincoat, blue pants, and yellow boots, sitting on a wooden balcony of a lighthouse. He is looking down with a sad expression, his hand to his forehead. The lighthouse has a white base and a lantern room with yellow light. A seagull is perched on the railing next to a red and white lifebuoy. The background shows a dark, stormy sea under a night sky with dark clouds and a few stars. Two seagulls are flying in the sky.

LEVEL SIX

READER

The logo for 'The Good and Beautiful' curriculum, featuring a stylized white icon of an open book with a butterfly above it.

THE *Good* AND THE *Beautiful*
CURRICULUM

For use with the Level 6 Language Arts and Literature course.



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Saved at Sea

A Lighthouse Story



By Mrs. O. F. Walton

Edited by Mary Beyer and Jenny Phillips

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Chapter 1

My Strange Home

It was a strange day, the day that I was born. The waves were beating against the lighthouse, and the wind was roaring and raging against everything. Had the lighthouse not been built very firmly into the strong, solid rock, it, and all within it, must have been swept into the deep, wild sea.

It was a terrible storm. My grandfather said he had never known such a storm since he came to live on the island more than forty years before.

Many ships went down in the storm that day, and many lives were lost. But in the very midst of it, when the wind was highest, and the waves were strongest, and when the foam and the spray had completely covered the lighthouse windows, I, Alick Fergusson, was born.

I was born on a strange day, and I was born into a strange home. The lighthouse stood on an island, four miles distant from any land. The island was not very large; if you stood in the middle of it, you could see the sea all round you—that sea which was sometimes so blue and peaceful, and at other times was as black as ink and roaring and thundering on the rocky shores of the little island. At one side of the island, on a steep

rock overhanging the sea, stood the lighthouse. Night by night as soon as it began to grow dark, the lighthouse lamps were lighted.

I can remember how I used to admire those lights as a child. I would sit for hours watching them revolve and change in color. First, there was a white light, then a blue one, then a red one, then a green one—then a white one again. And, as the ships went by, they always kept a lookout for our friendly lights and avoided the rocks of which they warned them.

My grandfather, old Sandy Fergusson, was one of the lighthouse men whose duty it was always to keep these lamps in order and to light them every night. He was a clever, active old man and did his work well and cheerfully. His great desire was to be able to hold on at his post till I should be able to take his place.

At the time when my story begins, I was nearly twelve years old and daily growing taller and stronger. My grandfather was very proud of me and said I should soon be a young man, and then he should get me appointed in his place to look after the lighthouse.

I was very fond of my strange home and would not have changed it for any other. Many people would have thought it dull, for we seldom saw a strange face, and the lighthouse men were only allowed to go on shore for a few hours once in every two months. But I was very happy and thought there was no place in the world like our little island.

Close to the tower of the lighthouse was the house in which I and my grandfather lived. It was not a large house, but it was a very pleasant one. All the windows looked out over the sea, and plenty of sharp sea air came in whenever they were opened. All the furniture in the house belonged to the lighthouse and

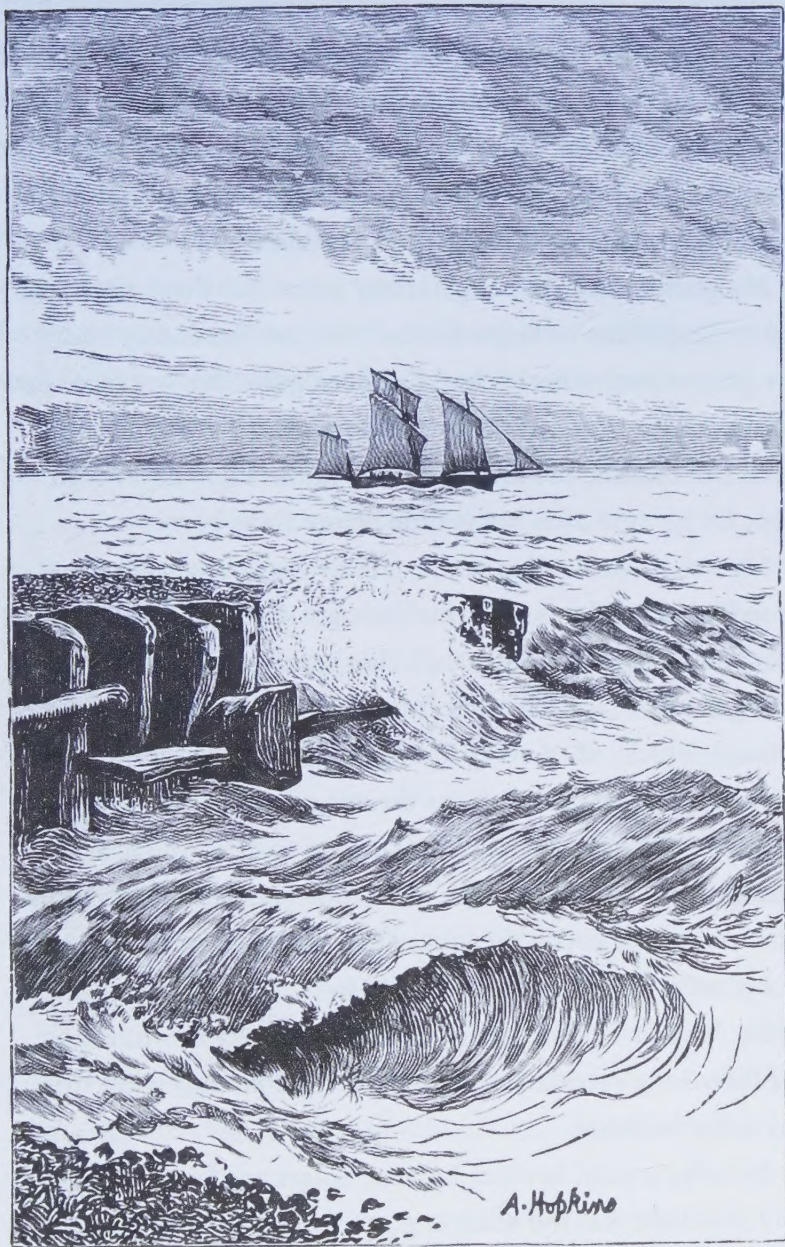
had been there long before my grandfather came to live there. Our cups and saucers and plates each had a little picture of the lighthouse with the waves dashing round it and the name of the lighthouse on them in large gilt letters. I used to think them very pretty when I was a boy.

We did not have many neighbors. There was only one other house on the island, and it was built on the other side of the lighthouse tower. The house belonged to Mr. Millar, who shared the care of the lighthouse with my grandfather. Just outside the two houses, was a court with a pump in the middle, from which we got our water. There was a high wall all round this court to make a little shelter for us from the stormy wind.

Beyond this court were two gardens, divided by an iron railing. The Millars' garden was very untidy and forlorn and filled with nettles, thistles, and all kinds of weeds, for Mr. Millar did not care for gardening, and Mrs. Millar had six little children and had no time to look after it.

But our garden was the admiration of everyone who visited the island. My grandfather and I were at work in it every fine day and took pride in keeping it as neat as possible. Although it was so near the sea, our garden produced the most beautiful vegetables and fruit, and the borders were filled with flowers, cabbage-roses, pansies, wallflowers, and many other hardy plants which were not afraid of the sea air.

Outside the garden was a good-sized field—full of small hillocks, over which the wild rabbits and hares, with which the island abounded, were continually scampering. In this field a cow and two goats were kept to supply the two families with milk and butter. Beyond it was the rocky shore and a little pier built out into the sea.



THE LANDING-STAGE.

On this pier I used to stand every Monday morning to watch for the steamer which called at the island once a week. It was a great event to us when the steamer came. My grandfather and I, and Mr. and Mrs. Millar and the children, all came down to the shore to welcome it. This steamer brought our provisions for the week from a town some miles off and often brought a letter for Mr. Millar or a newspaper for my grandfather.

My grandfather did not get many letters, for there were not many people that he knew. He had lived on that lonely island the greater part of his life and had been quite shut out from the world. All his relations were dead now, except my father, and what had become of him, we did not know. I had never seen him, for he went away some time before I was born.

My father was a sailor, a fine, tall, strong young fellow, my grandfather used to say. He had brought my mother to the island and left her in my grandfather's care while he went on a voyage to Australia. He went from the island in that same little steamer which called every Monday morning. My grandfather stood on the end of the pier as the steamer went out of sight, and my mother waved her handkerchief to him as long as any smoke was seen on the horizon. Grandfather has often told me how young and pretty she looked that summer morning.

My father had promised to write soon, but no letter ever came. Mother went down to the pier every Monday morning for three long years to see if it had brought her any word from her sailor husband.

But after a time, her step became slower and her face paler, and at last she was too weak to go down the rocks to the pier when the steamer arrived on Monday morning. And soon after this, I was left motherless.

From that day, the day on which my mother died, my grandfather became both father and mother to me. There was nothing he would not have done for me, and wherever he went and whatever he did, I was always by his side.

As I grew older, he taught me to read and write, for there was, of course, no school that I could attend. I also learned to help him trim the lamps and work in the garden. Our life went on very evenly from day to day until I was about twelve years old. I used to wish sometimes that something new would happen to make a little change on the island. And at last a change came.

Chapter 2

The Flare at Sea

My grandfather and I were sitting at tea one dark November evening. We had been digging in the garden the whole morning, but in the afternoon it had become so wet and stormy that we had remained indoors.

We were sitting quietly at our tea, planning what we would do the next day, when the door suddenly opened, and Mr. Millar put his head in.

“Sandy, quick!” he said. “Look here!” My grandfather and I ran to the door and looked out over the sea. There, about three miles to the north of us, we saw a bright flare of light. It blazed up for a moment or two, lighting up the wild and stormy sky, and then it went out, and all was darkness again.

“What is it, Grandfather?” I asked. But he did not answer me.

“There’s no time to lose, Jem,” he said. “Out with the boat, my man!”

“It’s an awful sea,” said Millar, looking at the waves beating fiercely against the rocks.

“Never mind, Jem,” said my grandfather. “We must do our best.” So the two men went down to the shore, and I followed them.

"What is it, Grandfather?" I asked again.

"There's something wrong out there," he said, pointing to the place where we had seen the light. "That's the flare they always make when they're in danger and want help at once."

"Are you going to them, Grandfather?" I said.

"Yes, if we can get the boat out," he said. "Now, Jem, are you ready?"

"Let me go with you, Grandfather," I said. "I might be able to help."

"Alright, my lad," he said. "We'll try to get her off."

I can see that scene with my mind's eye as though it were but yesterday. My grandfather and Mr. Millar straining every nerve to row the boat from land, whilst I clung on to one of the seats and tried in vain to steer her. I can see poor Mrs. Millar standing on the pier, with her shawl over her head, watching us, and two of her little girls clinging to her dress. I can see the waves, which seemed to be rising higher every moment, ready to beat our little boat to pieces. And I can see my grandfather's disappointed face, as, after many fruitless attempts, he was obliged to give it up.

"It's no use, I'm afraid, Jem," he said at last. "We haven't enough hands to manage her."

So we got to shore as best we could and paced up and down the little pier. We could see nothing more. It was a very dark night, and all was perfect blackness over the sea.

The lighthouse lamps were burning brightly; they had been lighted more than two hours before. It was Millar's turn to watch, so he went up to the tower, and my grandfather and I remained on the pier.

"Can nothing be done, Grandfather?"

"I'm afraid not, my lad. We can't make any way against such a sea as this; if it goes down a bit, we'll have another try at it."

But the sea did not go down. We walked up and down the pier almost in silence.

Presently, a rocket shot up into the sky from the same place where we had seen the flare.

"There she is again, Alick! Poor things! I wonder how many of them there are."

"Can we do nothing at all?" I asked again.

"No, my lad," he said. "The sea's too much for us. It's a terrible night. It reminds me of the day you were born."

So the night wore away. We never thought of going to bed, but walked up and down the pier, with our eyes fixed on the place where we had seen the lights. Every now and then, for some hours, rockets were sent up; and then they ceased, and we saw nothing.

"They've got no more with them," said my grandfather. "Poor things! It's a terrible bad job."

"What's wrong with them, Grandfather?" I asked. "Are there rocks over there?"

"Yes, there's the Ainslie Crag just there; it's a nasty place—a very nasty place. Many a fine ship has been lost there!"

At last, the day began to dawn; a faint grey light spread over the sea. We could distinguish now the masts of a ship in the far distance. "There she is, poor thing!" said my grandfather, pointing in the direction of the ship. "She's close on Ainslie Crag—I thought so!"

"The wind's gone down a bit now, hasn't it?" I asked.

"Yes, and the sea's a bit stiller just now," he said. "Give Jem a call, Alick."

Jem Millar hastened down to the pier with his arms full of rope.

“Alright, Jem, my lad,” said my grandfather. “Let’s be off; I think we may manage it now.”

So we jumped into the boat and put off from the pier. It was a fearful struggle with the wind and waves, and for a long time we seemed to make no way against them. Both the men were much exhausted, and Jem Millar seemed ready to give in.

“Cheer up, Jem, my lad,” said my grandfather. “Think of all the poor fellows out there. Let’s have one more try!”

So they made a mighty effort, and the pier was left a little way behind. Slowly, very slowly, we made that distance greater; slowly, very slowly, Mrs. Millar, who was standing on the shore, faded from our sight, and the masts of the ship in distress seemed to grow a little more near. Yet, the waves were still fearfully strong and appeared ready, every moment, to swallow up our little boat. Would my grandfather and Millar ever be able to hold on till they reached the ship, which was still more than two miles away?

“What’s that?” I cried, as I caught sight of a dark object, rising and falling with the waves.

“It’s a boat, surely!” said my grandfather. “Look, Jem!”

Chapter 3

The Bundle Saved

It was a boat of which I had caught sight—a boat bottom upwards. A minute afterwards, it swept close past us, so near that we could almost touch it.

“They’ve lost their boat. Pull away, Jem!”

“Oh, Grandfather!” I said—and the wind was so high, I could only make him hear by shouting—“Grandfather, do you think the boat was full?”

“No,” he said. “I think they’ve tried to put her off, and she’s been swept away. Keep up, Jem!” For Jem Millar, who was not a strong man, seemed ready to give in.

We were now considerably more than halfway between the boat and the ship. It seemed as if those on board had caught sight of us, for another rocket went up. They had evidently kept one back, as a last hope, in case any one should pass by.

As we drew nearer, we could see that it was a large ship, and we could distinguish many forms moving about on deck.

“Poor fellows! Poor fellows!” said my grandfather. “Pull away, Jem!”

Nearer and nearer we came to the ship, till at length we could see her quite distinctly. She had struck on Ainslie Crag. Her

stern was under water, and the waves were beating wildly on her deck. We could see men clinging to the rigging, which remained on the broken masts of the ship.

I shall never forget that sight to my dying day! My grandfather and Jem Millar saw it, and they pulled on desperately.

And now we were so near to the vessel that had it not been for the storm which was raging, we could have spoken to those on board. Again and again we tried to come alongside the shattered ship, but we were swept away by the rush of the strong, resistless waves.

Several of the sailors came to the side of the ship and threw out a rope to us. It was long before we could catch it, but at last, as we were being carried past it, I clutched it, and my grandfather immediately made it secure.

“Now!” he cried. “Steady, Jem! We shall save some of them yet!” And he pulled the boat as near as possible to the ship.

Oh, how my heart beat that moment as I looked at the men and women all crowding towards the place where the rope was fastened.

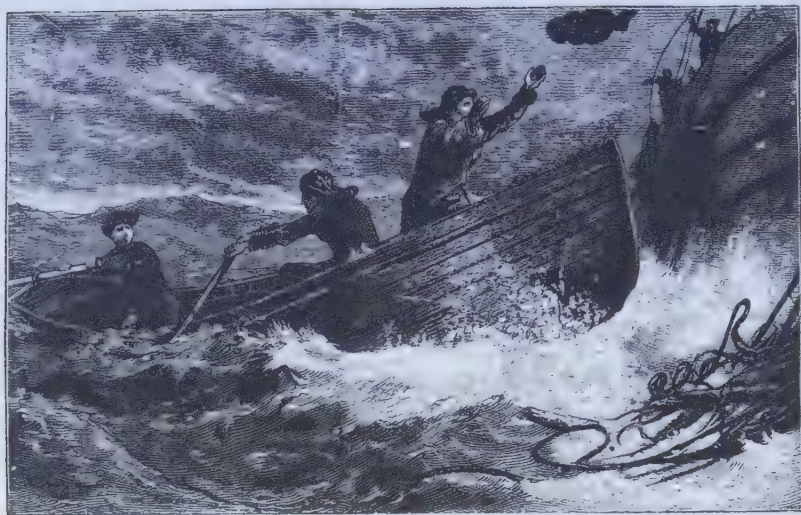
“We can’t take them all,” said my grandfather anxiously. “We must cut the rope when we’ve got as many as the boat will carry.”

I shuddered as I thought of those who would be left behind.

We had now come so close to the ship that the men on board would be able to watch for their opportunity and jump into the boat whenever a great wave was past and there was a lull for a moment in the storm.

“Look out, Jem!” cried my grandfather. “Here’s the first.”

A man was standing by the rope with what appeared to be a bundle in his arms. The moment we came near, he seized his opportunity and threw it to us. My grandfather caught it.



‘IT’S A CHILD, ALICK!’ HE SAID; ‘PUT IT DOWN BY YOU.’

“It’s a child, Alick!” he said. “Put it down by you.”

I put the bundle at my feet, and my grandfather cried, “Now another; quick, my lads!”

But at this moment Jem Millar seized his arm. “Sandy! Look out!” he almost shrieked.

My grandfather turned round. A mighty wave, bigger than any I had seen before, was coming towards us. In another moment we should have been dashed by its violence against the ship and all have perished.

My grandfather hastily let go the rope, and we just got out of the way of the ship before the wave reached us. And then came a noise, loud as a terrible thunder-clap, as the mighty wave dashed against Ainslie Crag. I could hardly breathe, so dreadful was the moment!

“Now back again for some more!” cried my grandfather when the wave had passed.

We looked around, but the ship was gone! It had disappeared

like a dream when one awakes, as if it had never been. That mighty wave had broken its back and shattered it into a thousand fragments. Nothing was to be seen of the ship or its crew but a few floating pieces of timber.

My grandfather and Millar pulled hastily to the spot, but it was some time before we could reach it, for we had been carried by the sea almost a mile away, and the storm seemed to be increasing in violence.

When at last we reached that terrible Ainslie Crag, we were too late to save a single life; we could not find one of those on board. The greater number no doubt had been carried down in the vortex made by the sinking ship, and the rest had risen and sunk again long before we reached them.

For some time we battled with the waves, unwilling to relinquish all hope of saving some of them. But we found at last that it was of no use, and we were obliged to return.

All had perished except the child lying at my feet. I stooped down to it and could hear that it was crying, but it was so tightly tied up in a blanket that I could not see it nor release it.

We had to strain every nerve to reach the lighthouse. It was not so hard returning as going, for the wind was in our favor, but the sea was still strong, and we were often in great danger. I kept my eyes fixed on the lighthouse lamps and steered the boat as straight as I could. Oh, how thankful we were to see those friendly lights growing nearer. And at last the pier came in sight, and Mrs. Millar still standing there watching us.

"Have you got none of them?" she said as we came up the steps.

"Nothing but a child," said my grandfather sadly. "Only one small child, that's all. Well, we did our very best, Jem, my lad."

Jem was following my grandfather with the oars over his shoulder.

I came last, with that little bundle in my arms.

The child had stopped crying now and seemed to be asleep, it was so still. Mrs. Millar wanted to take it from me and undo the blanket, but my grandfather said, "Bide your time, Mary; bring the child into the house, my lass; it's bitter cold out here."

So we all went up through the field and through our garden and the court. The blanket was tightly fastened round the child, except at the top, where room had been left for it to breathe, and I could just see a little nose and two closed eyes as I peeped in at the opening.

The bundle was a good weight, and before I reached the house I was glad of Mrs. Millar's help to carry it. We came into our little kitchen, and Mrs. Millar took the child on her knee and unfastened the blanket.

"Bless her," she said, as her tears fell fast. "It's a little girl!"

"Ay," said my grandfather. "So it is; it's a bonnie wee lassie!"

Chapter 4

Little Timpey

I do not think I have ever seen a prettier face than that child's. She had light brown hair and round, rosy cheeks and the bluest of blue eyes.

She awoke as we were looking at her, and seeing herself amongst strangers, she cried bitterly.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Millar. "She wants her mother."

"Mam—ma! Ma—ma!" cried the little girl.

Mrs. Millar fairly broke down at this and sobbed and cried as much as the child.

"Come, my lass," said her husband. "Cheer up! Thee'll make her worse if thee takes on so."

But Mrs. Millar could do nothing but cry. "Just think if it was our Polly!" was all that she could say. "Oh, Jem, just think if it was our Polly that was calling for me!"

My grandfather took the child from her and put her on my knee. "Now, Mary," he said, "get us a bit of fire and something to eat, there's a good woman! The child's cold and hungered, and we're much about the same ourselves."

Mrs. Millar bustled about the house and soon lighted a blazing fire; then she ran in next door to see if her children,

whom she had left with a little servant girl, were alright, and she brought back with her some cold meat for our breakfast.

I sat down on a stool before the fire with the child on my knee. She seemed to be about two years old, a strong, healthy little thing. She had stopped crying now and did not seem to be afraid of me; but whenever any of the others came near, she hid her face in my shoulder.

Mrs. Millar brought her a basin of bread and milk, and she let me feed her.

She seemed very weary and sleepy, as if she could hardly keep her eyes open. "Poor wee lassie!" said my grandfather; "I expect they pulled her out of her bed to bring her on deck. Won't you put her to bed?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Millar, "I'll put her in our Polly's bed; she'll sleep there quite nice, she will."

But the child clung to me and cried so loudly when Mrs. Millar tried to take her that my grandfather said, "I wouldn't take her away, poor motherless lamb; she takes kindly to Alick; let her bide here."

So we made up a little bed for her on the sofa; and Mrs. Millar brought one of little Polly's nightgowns and undressed and washed her and put her to bed.

The child was still very shy of all of them but me. She seemed to have taken to me from the first, and when she was put into her little bed she held out her tiny hand to me and said, "Handie, Timpey's handie."

"What does she say? Bless her!" said Mrs. Millar, for it was almost the first time that the child had spoken.

"She wants me to hold her little hand," I said, "Timpey's little hand. Timpey must be her name!"

"I never heard of such a name," said Mrs. Millar. "Timpey, did you say? What do they call you, darling?" she said to the child.

But the little blue eyes were closing wearily, and very soon the child was asleep. I still held that tiny hand in mine as I sat beside her; I was afraid of waking her by putting it down.

"I wonder who she is," said Mrs. Millar in a whisper as she folded up her little clothes. "She has beautiful things on, to be sure! She has been well taken care of, anyhow! Stop, here's something written on the little petticoat; can you make it out, Alick?"

I laid down the little hand very carefully and took the tiny petticoat to the window.

"Yes," I said, "this will be her name. Here's Villiers written on it."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Millar. "Yes, that will be her name. Dear me, dear me; to think of her poor father and mother at the bottom of that dreadful sea! Just think if it was our Polly!" And then Mrs. Millar cried so much again that she was obliged to go home and finish her cry with her little Polly clasped tightly in her arms.

My grandfather was very worn out with all he had done during the night and went upstairs to bed. I sat watching the little sleeping child. I felt as if I could not leave her.

She slept very quietly and peacefully. Poor little pet! How little she knows what has happened, I thought; and my tears came fast and fell on the little fat hand which was lying on the pillow. But after a few minutes I leaned my head against the sofa and fell fast asleep. I had had no sleep the night before and was quite worn out.

I was awakened, some hours after, by someone pulling my hair and a little voice calling in my ear, "Up! Up, boy! Up! Up!"

I looked up and saw a little roguish face looking at me—the merriest, brightest little face you can imagine.

"Up, up, boy, please!" she said again, in a coaxing voice.

So I lifted up my head, and she climbed out of her little bed on the sofa on to my knee.

"Put shoes on, boy," she said, holding out her little bare toes.

I put on her shoes and stockings, and then Mrs. Millar came in and dressed her.

It was a lovely afternoon; the storm had ceased whilst we had been asleep, and the sun was shining brightly. I got the dinner ready, and the child watched me and ran backwards and forwards, up and down the kitchen. She seemed quite at home now and very happy.

My grandfather was still asleep, so I did not wake him. Mrs. Millar brought in some broth she had made for the child, and we dined together. I wanted to feed her, as I had done the night before, but she said—

"Timpey have 'poon, please!" and took the spoon from me and fed herself so prettily, I could not help watching her.

"God bless her, poor little thing!" said Mrs. Millar.

"God bless 'ou," said the child. The words were evidently familiar to her.

"She must have heard her mother say so," said Mrs. Millar in a choking voice.

When we had finished dinner, the child slipped down from her stool and ran to the sofa. Here she found my grandfather's hat, which she put on her head, and my scarf, which she hung

round her neck. Then she marched to the door and said, "Tatta, tatta; Timpey go tatta."

"Take her out a bit, Alick," said Mrs. Millar. "Stop a minute, though; I'll fetch her Polly's hood." So, to her great delight, we dressed her in Polly's hood and put a warm shawl round her, and I took her out.

Oh, how she ran, and jumped, and played in the garden. I never saw such a merry little thing. Now she was picking up stones; now she was gathering daisies ('day days, she called them); now she was running down the path and calling to me to catch her. She was never still a single instant!

But every now and then, as I was playing with her, I looked across the sea to Ainslie Crag. The sea had not gone down much, though the wind had ceased, and I saw the waves still dashing wildly upon the rocks.

And I thought of what lay beneath them, of the shattered ship, and of the child's mother. Oh! if she only knew, I thought, as I listened to her merry laugh, which made me more ready to cry than her tears had done.

Chapter 5

The Unclaimed Sunbeam

My grandfather and Jem Millar were sitting over the fire in the little watchroom in the lighthouse tower, and I sat beside them with the child on my knee. I had found an old picture book for her, and she was turning over the leaves and making her funny little remarks on the pictures.

“Well, Sandy,” said Millar, “what shall we do with her?”

“Do with her?” said my grandfather, stroking her little fair head. “We’ll keep her! Won’t we, little lassie?”

“Yes,” said the child, looking up and nodding her head, as if she understood all about it.

“We ought to look up some of her relations, it seems to me,” said Jem. “She’s sure to have some, somewhere.”

“And how are we to find them out?” asked my grandfather.

“Oh, the captain can soon make out for us what ship is missing, and we can send a line to the owners; they’ll know who the passengers were.”

“Well,” said my grandfather, “maybe you’re right, Jem; we’ll see what they say. But, for my part, if those that cares for the child are at the bottom of that sea, I hope no one else will come and take her away from us.”

"If I hadn't so many of them at home . . ." began Millar.

"Oh yes, my lad, I know that," said my grandfather, interrupting him; "but thy house is full enough already. Let the wee lassie come to Alick and me. She'll be a nice little bit of company for us; and Mary will see to her clothes and such like, I know."

"Yes, that she will," said her husband. "I do declare she has been crying about that child the best part of the day! She has indeed!"

My grandfather followed Jem's advice and told Captain Sayers, when he came in the steamer the next Monday, the whole story of the shipwreck and asked him to find out for him the name and address of the owners of the vessel.

Oh, how I hoped that no one would come to claim my little darling. She became dearer to me every day, and I felt as if it would break my heart to part with her. Every night, when Mrs. Millar had undressed her, she knelt beside me in her little white nightgown to 'talk to God,' as she called praying. She had evidently learnt a little prayer from her mother, for the first night she began of her own accord,

"Jesus, Eppy, hear me."

I could not think at first what it was that she was saying; but Mrs. Millar said she had learnt the hymn when she was a little girl, and she wrote out the first verse for me. And every night afterwards I let the child repeat it after me,

"Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb tonight,
Through the darkness be Thou near me,
Keep me safe till morning light."

I thought I should like her always to say the prayer her

mother had taught her. I never prayed myself—my grandfather had never taught me. I wondered if my mother would have taught me if she had lived. I thought she would.

I knew very little in those days of the Bible. My grandfather did not care for it and never read it. He had a large Bible, but it was always laid on the top of the chest of drawers, as a kind of ornament; and unless I took it down to look at the curious old pictures inside; it was never opened.

Sunday on the island was just the same as any other day. My grandfather worked in the garden or read the newspaper, just the same as usual, and I rambled about the rocks, or did my lessons, or worked in the house, as I did every other day in the week. We had no church or chapel to go to, and nothing happened to mark the day.

I often think now of that dreadful morning when we went across the stormy sea to that sinking ship. If our boat had capsized then, if we had been lost, what would have become of our souls? It is a very solemn thought, and I cannot be too thankful to God for sparing us both a little longer. My grandfather was a kind-hearted, good-tempered, honest old man, but I know now that that is not enough to open the door of heaven. Jesus is the only way there, and my grandfather knew little of, and cared nothing for Him.

Little Timpey became my constant companion, indoors and out of doors. She was rather shy of the little Millars, for they were noisy and rough in their play, but she clung to me and never wanted to leave me.

Day by day, she learned new words and came out with such odd little remarks of her own, that she made us all laugh. Her great pleasure was to get hold of a book and pick out the

different letters of the alphabet, which, although she could hardly talk, she knew quite perfectly.

Dear little pet! I can see her now, sitting at my feet on a large flat rock by the seashore and calling me every minute to look at A, or B, or D, or S.

And so by her pretty ways, she crept into all our hearts, and we quite dreaded the answer coming to the letter my grandfather had written to the owners of the *Victory*, which, we found, was the name of the lost ship.

It was a very wet day, the Monday that the answer came. I had been waiting some time on the pier and was wet through before the steamer arrived. Captain Sayers handed me the letter before anything else, and I ran it up to my grandfather at once. I could not wait until our provisions and supplies were brought on shore.

Little Timpey was sitting on a stool at my grandfather's feet, winding a long piece of tape round and round her little finger. She ran to meet me as I came in, and she held up her face to be kissed.

What if this letter should say she was to leave us and go back by the steamer! I drew a long breath as my grandfather opened it.

It was a very civil letter from the owners of the ship, thanking us for all we had done to save the unhappy crew and passengers, but saying they knew nothing of the child or her belongings, as no one of the name of Villiers had taken a cabin, and there was no sailor on board of that name. But they said they would make further inquiries in Calcutta, from which port the vessel had sailed. Meanwhile, they begged my grandfather to take charge of the child and assured him he should be handsomely rewarded for his trouble.

“That’s right!” I said when he had finished reading it. “Then she doesn’t have to go yet!”

“No,” said my grandfather. “Poor wee lassie! We can’t spare her yet. I don’t want any of their rewards, Alick, not I! That’s reward enough for me,” he said as he lifted up the child to kiss his wrinkled forehead.

Chapter 6

The Old Gentleman's Question

The next Monday morning Timpey and I went down together to the pier to await the arrival of the steamer. She had brought a doll with her, which Mrs. Millar had given her, and of which she was very proud.

Captain Sayers sent for me, as soon as the steamer came up to the pier, to tell me that two gentlemen had come to see my grandfather. I held the child's hand very tightly in mine, for I had felt sure they had come for her.

The gentlemen came up the steps a minute or two afterwards. One of them was a middle-aged man with a very clever face, I thought. He told me he had come to see Mr. Alexander Fergusson and asked me if I could direct him which way to go to the house.

"Yes, sir," I said; "Mr. Fergusson is my grandfather." So we went up towards the lighthouse, Timpey and I walking first to lead the way, the gentlemen following. The other gentleman was quite old and had white hair and gold spectacles and a pleasant, kindly face.

Timpey could not walk very fast, and she kept running first to one side and then to another to gather flowers or pick up stones, so I took her in my arms and carried her.

"Is that your little sister?" asked the old gentleman.

"No, sir," I said. "This is the little girl who was on board the Victory!"

"Dear me! Dear me!" said both gentlemen at once. "Let me look at her," said the old man, arranging his spectacles.

But Timpey was frightened and clung to me and began to cry. "Never mind, never mind," said the old gentleman kindly. "We'll make friends with one another by-and-by."

By this time we had reached the house, and the middle-aged gentleman introduced himself as Mr. Septimus Forster, one of the owners of the lost vessel, and said that he and his father-in-law, Mr. Davis, had come to hear all particulars that my grandfather could give them with regard to the shipwreck.

My grandfather begged them to sit down and told me to prepare breakfast for them at once. They were very pleasant gentlemen, both of them, and were very kind to my grandfather. Mr. Forster wanted to make Grandfather a handsome present for what he had done, but my grandfather would not take it. They talked much of little Timpey, and I kept stopping to listen as I was setting out the cups and saucers. They had heard nothing more of her relations, and they said it was a very strange thing that no such name as Villiers was to be found on the list of passengers on board. They offered to take her away with them till some relation was found, but my grandfather begged to keep her. The gentlemen, seeing how happy and well cared for the child was, gladly consented.

After breakfast Mr. Forster said he should like to see the

lighthouse, so my grandfather went up to the top of the tower with him and showed him with great pride all that was to be seen there. Old Mr. Davis was tired and stayed behind with little Timpey and me.

"This is a strong house, my lad," he said when the others had gone.

"Yes, sir," I said, "it ought to be strong; the wind is fearful here sometimes."

"What sort of a foundation does it have?" said the old man, tapping the floor with his stick.

"Oh, it's all rock, sir," I answered, "solid rock; our house and the lighthouse tower are all built into the rock; they would never stand if they weren't."

"And are you on the Rock, my lad?" said Mr. Davis, looking at me through his spectacles.

"I beg your pardon, sir," I said, for I thought I had not heard him rightly.

"Are you on the Rock?" he repeated.

"On the rock, sir? Oh, yes," I said, thinking he could not have understood what I said before. "All these buildings are built into the rock, or the wind and sea would carry them away."

"But you," said the old gentleman again, "are you on the Rock?"

"I don't quite understand you, sir," I said.

"Never mind," he said. "I'll ask your grandfather when he comes down." So I sat still, wondering what he could mean and almost thinking he must have gone out of his mind.

As soon as my grandfather returned, he put the same question to him; and my grandfather answered it as I had done, by assuring him how firmly and strongly the lighthouse and its surroundings were built into the solid rock.

"And you yourself," said Mr. Davis. "How long have you been on the Rock?"

"I, sir?" said my grandfather. "I suppose you mean how long have I lived here; forty years, sir—forty years come the twelfth of next month I've lived on this rock."

"And how much longer do you expect to live here?" said the old gentleman.

"Oh, I don't know, sir," said my grandfather. "As long as I live, I suppose. Alick, here, will take my place by-and-by; he's a fine, strong boy is Alick, sir."

"And where will you live when you leave the island?" asked Mr. Davis.

"Oh, I never mean to leave it," said my grandfather; "not till I die, sir."

"And then; where will you live then?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir," said my grandfather. "In heaven, I suppose. But, dear me, I'm not going there just yet," he said, as if he did not like the turn the conversation was taking.

"Would you mind answering me one more question?" said old Mr. Davis. "Would you kindly tell me why you think you'll go to heaven? You won't mind my asking you, will you?"

"Oh dear, no," said my grandfather, "not at all, sir. Well, sir, you see I've never done anybody any harm, and God is very merciful, and so I've no doubt it will be alright at last."

"Why, my dear friend," said the old gentleman, "I thought you said you were on the Rock. You're not on the Rock at all; you're on the sand!" He was going to add more when one of Captain Sayer's men ran up to say the steamer was ready to start and would they kindly come at once, as it was late already. So the two gentlemen jumped up and prepared hastily to go down to the beach.

But as old Mr. Davis took leave of my grandfather, he said earnestly, "My friend, you are building on the sand; you are indeed, and it won't stand the storm; no, it won't stand the storm!" He had no time to say more; the sailor hastened him away.

I followed them down to the pier and stood there watching the steamer preparing to start.

There was a little delay after the gentlemen went on board, and I saw Mr. Davis sit down on a seat on deck, take out his pocketbook, and write something on one of the leaves. Then he tore the leaf out and gave it to one of the sailors to hand to me as I stood on the pier, and in another moment the steamer had started.

Chapter 7

A Thick Fog

I still have that little piece of paper which was given me that day, kept amongst my greatest treasures. There was not much written on it, only two lines of a hymn:

“On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand.”

I walked slowly up to the house thinking. My grandfather was out with Jem Millar, so I did not show him the paper then, but I read the lines many times over as I was playing with little Timpey, and I wondered very much what they meant.

In the evening my grandfather and Jem Millar generally sat together over the fire in the little watchroom upstairs, and I used to take little Timpey up there until it was time for her to go to bed. She liked climbing up the stone steps in the lighthouse tower. She used to call out, “Up! Up! Up!” as she went along until she reached the top step, and then she would run into the watchroom with a merry laugh.

As we went in this evening, my grandfather and Jem were talking together of the visit of the two gentlemen. “I can’t think what the old man meant about the rock,” my grandfather was saying. “I couldn’t make head or tail of it, Jem; could you, my lad?”

"Look there, Grandfather," I said, as I handed him the little piece of paper and told him how I had got it.

"Well, to be sure!" said my grandfather. "So he gave you this, did he?" and he read aloud:

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand."

"Well now, Jem, what does he mean? He kept on saying to me, 'You're on the sand, my friend; you're on the sand, and it won't stand the storm!' What do you make of it, Jem? Did you hear him, my lad?"

"Yes," said Jem thoughtfully; "and it has set me thinking, Sandy; I know what he meant well enough."

"And pray what may that be?"

"He meant we can't get to heaven except we come to Christ; we can't get there any other way. That's just what it means, Sandy!"

"Do you mean to tell me," said my grandfather, "that I shan't get to heaven if I do my best?"

"No, it won't do, Sandy; there's only one way to heaven; I know that well enough."

"Dear me, Jem!" said my grandfather, "I never heard you talk like that before."

"No," said Jem, "I've forgot all about it since I came to the island. I had a good mother years ago; I ought to have done better than I have done."

He said no more, but he was very silent all the evening. Grandfather read his newspaper aloud and talked on all manner of subjects, but Jem Millar's thoughts seemed far away.

The next day was his day for going on shore. My grandfather and Jem took turns going the last Friday in every month; it was

the only time they were allowed to leave the island. When it was my grandfather's turn, I generally went with him and much enjoyed getting a little change. But whichever of them went, it was a great day with us on the island, for they bought any little things that we might be needing for our houses or gardens and did any business that had to be done on shore.

We all went down to the pier to see Jem Millar start; and as I was helping him to get on board some empty sacks and some other things he had to take with him, he said to me, in an undertone, "Alick, my lad, keep that bit of paper; it's all true what that old gentleman said. I've been thinking of it ever since; and, Alick," he whispered, "I believe I am on the Rock now."

He said no more, but arranged his oars, and in a minute more he was off. But as he rowed away, I heard, him singing softly to himself:

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand."

We watched the boat out of sight and then went home, wishing that it was evening and that Jem was back again with all the things that we had asked him to get for us.

That was a very gloomy afternoon. A thick fog came over the sea and gradually closed us in so that we could hardly see a step before us on the beach.

Little Timpey began to cough, so I took her indoors and amused her there with a picture book. It grew so dark that my grandfather lighted the lighthouse lamps soon after dinner. There was a dull, yellow light over everything.

I never remember a more gloomy afternoon; and as evening came on, the fog grew denser, till at length we could see nothing outside the windows.

It was no use looking out for Jem's return, for we could not see the sea, much less any boat upon it. So we stayed indoors, and my grandfather sat by the fire smoking his pipe.

"I thought Jem would have been here before now," he said at length as I was putting out the cups and saucers for tea.

"Oh, he'll come before we've finished tea, I think, Grandfather," I answered. "I wonder what sort of a spade he'll have got for us."

When tea was over, the door opened suddenly, and we looked up, expecting to see Jem enter with our purchases. But it was not Jem; it was his wife.

"Sandy," she said, "what time do you make it? My clock's stopped!"

"Twenty minutes past six," said my grandfather, looking at his watch.

"Past six!" she repeated. "Why, Jem's very late!"

"Yes," said my grandfather, "I'll go down to the pier and have a look out."

But he came back soon, saying it was impossible to see anything. The fog was so thick, he was almost afraid of walking over the pier. "But he's bound to be in at seven," he said (for that was the hour the lighthouse men were required to be on the island again), "so he'll soon be up now."

The clock moved on, and still Jem Millar did not come. I saw Mrs. Millar running to her door every now and then with her baby in her arms to look down the garden path. But no one came.

At last the clock struck seven.

"I never knew him to come in past seven before!" said my grandfather as he rose to go down to the pier once more.

Chapter 8

Waiting for the Boat

Poor Mrs. Millar went out of her house and followed my grandfather down to the pier. I waited indoors with little Timpey, straining my ears to listen for the sound of their footsteps coming back again.

But the clock struck half-past seven, and still no sound was to be heard. I could wait no longer; I wrapped the child in a shawl and carried her into the Millars' house and left her under the care of Mrs. Millar's little servant. And then I ran down, through the thick, smothering fog, to the pier.

My grandfather was standing there with Mrs. Millar. When I came close to them he was saying, "Cheer up, Mary, my lass; he's alright; he's only waiting till this mist has cleared away a bit. You go home, and I'll tell you as soon as I hear his boat coming. Why, you're wet through, woman; you'll get your death of cold!"

Her thin calico dress was soaked with the damp in the air, and she was shivering and looked as white as a sheet. At first she would not be persuaded to leave the pier; but, as time went on, and it grew darker and colder, she consented to do as my grandfather told her, and he promised he would send me up to the lighthouse to tell her as soon as Jem arrived.

When she was gone, my grandfather said, "Alick, there's something wrong with Jem, depend upon it! I didn't like to tell her so, poor soul! If we only had the boat, I would go out a bit of way and see."

We walked up and down the pier and stopped every now and then to listen for the sound of oars in the distance, for we should not be able to see the boat till it was close upon us, so dense had the fog become.

"Dear me," my grandfather kept saying anxiously, "I wish he would come!"

My thoughts went back to the bright sunny morning when Jem Millar had started and we had heard him singing, as he went, those two lines of the hymn,

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand."

The time passed on. Would he never come? We grew more and more anxious. Mrs. Millar's servant-girl came running down to say her mistress wanted to know if we could hear anything yet.

"No," my grandfather said, "nothing yet, my lass; but it can't be long now."

"Missus is so poorly," said the girl. "I think she's got a cold. She shakes all over, and she keeps fretting so."

"Poor soul! Well, perhaps it's better so."

"Whatever do you mean, Grandfather?" I asked.

"Why, if aught's amiss, she won't be so taken aback as if she wasn't afraid; and if Jem's alright, why, she'll only be the better pleased."

The girl went back, and we still waited on the pier. "Grandfather," I said at length, "I think I hear a boat."

It was a very still night; we stood and listened. At first my grandfather said he heard nothing; but at length he distinguished, as I did, the regular plash—plash—plash—of oars in the distance.

“Yes, it is a boat,” said my grandfather.

I was hastening to leave the pier and run up to the house to tell Mrs. Millar, but my grandfather laid his hand on my shoulder.

“Wait a bit, Alick, my lad,” he said; “let us hear what it is first; maybe it isn’t Jem, after all!”

“But it’s coming here, Grandfather; I can hear it better now.”

“Yes,” he said, “it’s coming here;” but he still kept his hand on my shoulder.

The boat had been a long way off when we first heard it, for it was many minutes before the sound of the oars seemed to become much more distinct. But it came nearer, and nearer, and nearer. Yes, the boat was evidently making for the island.

At last it came so near that my grandfather called out from the end of the pier, “Hollo, Jem! You’re late, my lad!”

“Hollo!” said a voice from the boat; but it wasn’t Jem’s voice. “Whereabouts is your landing-place?” said the voice. “It’s so thick, I can’t see.”

“Why, Jem isn’t there, Grandfather!” I said, catching hold of his arm.

“No,” said my grandfather; “I knew there was something wrong with the lad.”

He called out to the man in the boat the direction in which he was to row, and then he and I went down the steps together and waited for the boat to come up.

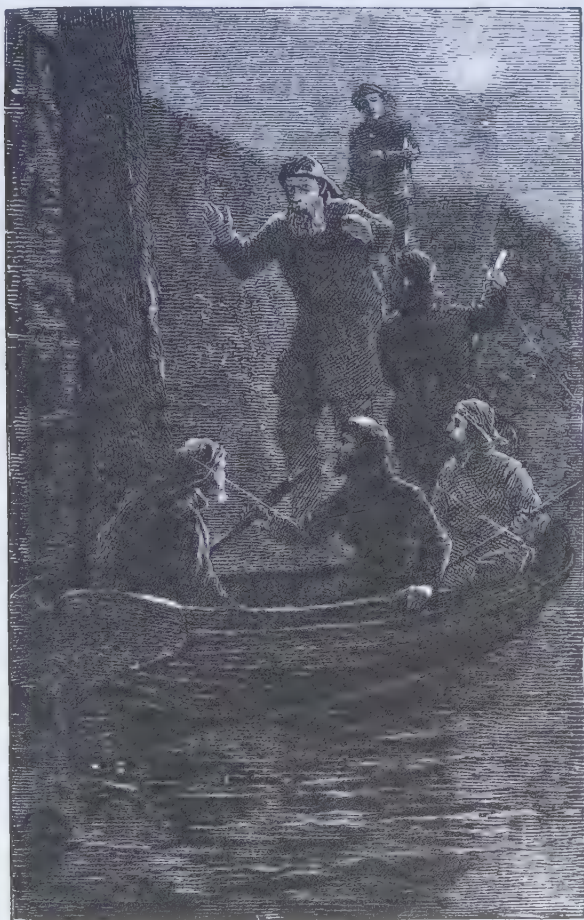
There were four men in the boat. They were sailors, and

strangers to me. One of them, the one whose voice we had heard, got out to speak to my grandfather.

“Something’s wrong,” said my grandfather, before he could begin. “Something’s wrong with that poor lad.”

“Yes,” said the man, “we’ve got him here;” and he pointed to the boat.

A cold shudder passed over me as he said this, and I caught sight of something lying at the men’s feet at the bottom of the boat.



‘HOW DID IT HAPPEN?’ I ASKED.

“What’s wrong with him? Has he had an accident? Is he much hurt?”

“He’s dead,” said the man solemnly.

“Oh dear!” said my grandfather in a choking voice. “However shall we tell his wife? However shall we tell poor Mary?”

“How did it happen?” I asked at length as soon as I could speak.

“He was getting a sack of flour on board, over yonder,” said one of the men in the boat, “and it was awful thick and foggy, and he missed his footing on the plank and fell in; that’s how it happened!”

“Yes,” said another man, “and it seems he couldn’t swim, and there was no boat nigh at hand to help him. Joe Malcolmson was there and saw him fall in; but before he could call any of us, it was all over with him. We got him out at last, but he was quite gone; we fetched a doctor and took him into a house near and rubbed him and did all we could; but it wasn’t of no good at all! Shall we bring him in?”

“Wait a bit,” said my grandfather. “We must tell that poor girl first. Which of you will go and tell her?”

The men looked at each other and did not speak. At last one of them, who knew my grandfather a little, said, “You’d better tell her, Sandy; she knows you, and she’ll bear it better than from strangers; we’ll wait here till you come back, and then we can bring him in.”

“Well,” said my grandfather with a groan, “I’ll go then! Come with me, Alick, my lad,” said he, turning to me. “But no, perhaps I’d better go by myself.”

So he went very slowly up towards the lighthouse, and I remained behind with the four men on the shore and that silent form lying at the bottom of the boat.

I was much frightened and felt as if it was all a very terrible dream, as if I should soon wake up to find it had all passed away.

Chapter 9

A Change in the Lighthouse

It seemed a long time before my grandfather came back, and then he only said in a low voice, "You can bring him now, my lads; she knows about it now."

And so the mournful little procession moved on, through the field, and garden, and court, and to the Millars' house, my grandfather and I following.

I shall never forget that night, nor the strange, solemn feeling I had then.

Mrs. Millar was very ill; the shock had been too much for her. The men went back in the boat to bring a doctor to the island to see her, and the doctor sent them back again to bring a nurse. He said he was afraid she would have an attack of brain-fever, and he thought her very ill indeed.

My grandfather and I sat in the Millars' house all night, for the nurse did not arrive until early in the morning. The six children were fast asleep in their little beds. I went to look at them once to see if my little Timpey was alright; she was lying in little Polly's bed, their tiny hands fast clasped together as they

slept. The tears came fast into my eyes as I thought that they both had lost a father, and yet neither of them knew anything of their loss!

When the nurse arrived, my grandfather and I went home. But we could not sleep. We lighted the kitchen fire and sat over it in silence for a long time.

Then my grandfather said, "Alick, my lad, it has given me such a turn as I haven't had for many a day. It might have been me, Alick; it might just as well have been me!"

I put my hand in his and grasped it very tightly as he said this. "Yes," he said again, "it might have been me; and if it had, I wonder where I should have been now?"

I didn't speak, and he went on, "I wonder where Jem is now, poor fellow; I've been thinking of that all night, ever since I saw him lying there at the bottom of that boat."

So I told him of what Jem Millar had said to me the last time I had seen him.

"On the Rock!" said my grandfather. "Did he say he was on the Rock? Dear me! I wish I could say as much, Alick, my lad."

"Can't you and I come as he came, Grandfather?" I said. "Can't we come and build on the Rock, too?"

"Well," said my grandfather, "I wish we could, my lad. I begin to see what he meant and what the old gentleman meant, too. He said, 'You're on the sand, my friend; you're on the sand, and it won't stand the storm; no, it won't stand the storm!' I've just had those words in my ears all the time we were sitting over there by Mrs. Millar. But, dear me, I don't know how to get on the Rock; I don't indeed."

The whole of the next week, poor Mrs. Millar lay between life and death. At first the doctor gave no hope whatever of her

recovery; but after a time, she grew a little better, and he began to speak more encouragingly. I spent my time with the poor children and hardly left them a moment, doing all I could to keep them quietly happy so that they might not disturb their mother.

One sorrowful day, my grandfather and I were absent for several hours from the lighthouse; for we went ashore to follow poor Jem Millar to the grave. His poor wife was unconscious and knew nothing of what was going on.

When, after some weeks, the fever left her, she was still very weak and unfit for work. But there was much to be done, and she had no time to sit still, for a new man had been appointed to take her husband's place; and he was to come into the house at the beginning of the month.

We felt very dull and sad the day that the Millars went away. We went down to the pier with them and saw them on board the steamer—Mrs. Millar, the six little children, and the servant girl, all dressed in mourning and all of them crying. They were going to Mrs. Millar's home, far away in the north of Scotland, where her old father and mother were still living.

The island seemed very lonely and desolate when they were gone. If it had not been for our little sunbeam, as my grandfather called her, I do not know what we should have done. Every day we loved her more, and what we dreaded most was that a letter would arrive some Monday morning to tell us that she must go away from us.

"Dear me, Alick," my grandfather would often say, "how little you and I thought that stormy night what a little treasure we had got wrapped up in that funny little bundle!"

The child was growing fast; the fresh sea did her great good, and every day she became more intelligent and pretty.

We were very curious to know who was appointed in Jem Millar's place; but we were not able to find out even what his name was. Captain Sayers said that he did not know anything about it; and the gentlemen who came over once or twice to see about the house being repaired and put in order for the newcomer were very silent on the subject and seemed to think us very inquisitive if we asked any questions. Of course, our comfort depended very much upon who our neighbor was, for he and my grandfather would be constantly together, and we should have no one else to speak to.

My grandfather was very anxious that we should give the man a welcome to the island and make him comfortable on his first arrival. So we set to work as soon as the Millars were gone, digging up the untidy garden belonging to the next house and making it as neat and pretty as we could for the newcomers.

"I wonder how many of them there will be," I said as we were at work in their garden.

"Maybe only just the man," said my grandfather. "When I came here first, I was a young unmarried man, Alick. But we shall soon know all about him; he'll be here next Monday morning, they say."

"It's a wonder he hasn't been over before," I said, "to see the house and the island. I wonder what he'll think of it?"

"He'll be strange at first, poor fellow," said my grandfather; "but we'll give him a bit of a welcome. Have a nice bit of breakfast ready for him, Alick, my lad, and for his wife and bairns too, if he has any—hot coffee and cakes, and a bit of meat, and anything else you like; they'll be glad of it after crossing over here."

So we made our little preparations and waited very anxiously indeed for Monday's steamer.

Monday morning came and found us standing on the pier as usual, awaiting the arrival of the steamer.

We were very anxious indeed to see our new neighbors. A nice little breakfast for four or five people was set out in our little kitchen, and I had gathered a large bunch of dahlias from our garden to make the table look cheerful and bright. All was ready, and in due time the steamer came puffing up towards the pier, and we saw a man standing on the deck, talking to Captain Sayers, who we felt sure must be the new lighthouse-man.

Chapter 10

Our New Neighbor

I don't see a wife," said my grandfather.

"Nor any children," said I, as I held little Timpey up that she might see the steamer.

"Puff, puff, puff," she said, as it came up, and then she turned round and laughed merrily.

The steamer came up to the landing place, and my grandfather and I went down the steps to meet Captain Sayers and the stranger.

"Here's your new neighbor, Sandy," said the captain. "Will you show him the way to his house whilst I see to your goods?"

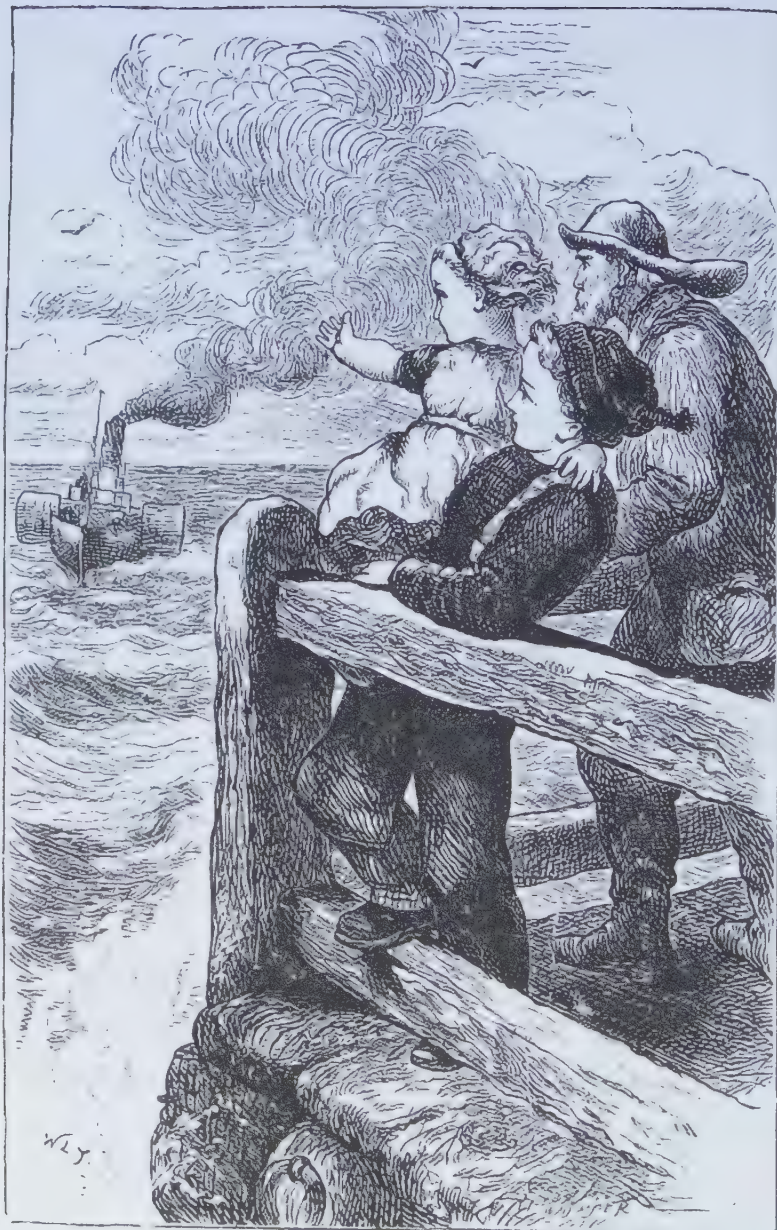
"Welcome to the island," said my grandfather, grasping his hand.

He was a tall, strongly-built man, very sun-burnt and weather-beaten.

"Thank you," said the man, looking at me all the time. "It is pleasant to have a welcome."

"That's my grandson, Alick," said my grandfather, putting his hand on my shoulder.

"Your grandson," repeated the man, looking earnestly at me; "your grandson—indeed!"



'PUFF, PUFF,' SAID LITTLE TIMPEY.

"And now come along," said my grandfather, "and get a bit of something to eat; we've got a cup of coffee all ready for you at home, and you'll be right welcome, I assure you."

"That's very kind of you," said the stranger.

We were walking up now towards the house, and the man did not seem much inclined to talk. I fancied once that I saw a tear in his eye, but I thought I must have been mistaken. What could he have to cry about? I little knew all that was passing through his mind.

"By the way," said my grandfather, turning around suddenly upon him, "what's your name? We've never heard it yet!"

The man did not answer, and my grandfather looked at him in astonishment. "Have you got no name?" he said. "Or have you objections to folks knowing what your name is?"

"Father!" said the man, taking hold of my grandfather's hand. "Don't you know your own lad?"

"Why, it's my David! Alick, look Alick, that's your father; it is indeed!"

And then my grandfather fairly broke down and sobbed like a child while my father grasped him tightly with one hand and put the other on my shoulder.

"I wouldn't let them tell you," he said. "I made them promise not to tell you till I could do it myself. I heard of Jem Millar's death as soon as I arrived in England, and I wrote off and applied for the place at once. I told them I was your son, Father, and they gave me it at once, as soon as they heard where I had been all these years."

"And where have you been, David, never to send us a line all the time?"

“Well, it’s a long story,” said my father. “Let’s come in, and I’ll tell you all about it.”

So we went in together, and my father still looked at me. “He’s very like HER, Father,” he said in a husky voice.

I knew he meant my mother!

“Then you heard about poor Alice?” said my grandfather.

“Yes,” he said; “it was a very curious thing. A man from these parts happened to be on board the vessel I came home in, and he told me all about it. I felt as if I had no heart left in me when I heard she was gone. I had just been thinking all the time how glad she would be to see me.”

Then my grandfather told him all he could about my poor mother. How she had longed to hear from him; and how, as week after week and month after month went by, and no news came, she had gradually become weaker and weaker. All this and much more he told him; and whenever he stopped, my father always wanted to hear more, so that it was not until we were sitting over the watch room fire in the evening that my father began to tell us his story.

He had been shipwrecked on the coast of China. The ship had gone to pieces not far from shore, and he and three other men had escaped safely to land. As soon as they stepped on shore, a crowd of Chinese gathered round them with anything but friendly faces. They were taken prisoners and carried before some man who seemed to be the governor of that part of the country. He asked them a great many questions, but they did not understand a word of what he said, and, of course, could not answer him.

For some days my father and the other men were very uncertain what their fate would be; for the Chinese at that

time were exceedingly jealous of any foreigner landing on their shore. However, one day they were brought out of the wooden house in which they had been imprisoned and taken on a long journey of some two hundred miles into the interior of the country. And here it was that my poor father had been all those years when we thought him dead. He was not unkindly treated, and he taught the half-civilized people there many things which they did not know and which they were very glad to learn. But both by day and night he was carefully watched, lest he should make his escape, and he never found a single opportunity of getting away from them. Of course, there were no posts and no railways in that remote place, and he was quite shut out from the world. Of what was going on at home, he knew as little as if he had been living in the moon.

Slowly and drearily, eleven long years passed away, and then, one morning, they were suddenly told that they were to be sent down to the coast and put on board a ship bound for England. They told my father that there had been a war, and that one of the conditions of peace was that they should give up all the foreigners in their country whom they were holding as prisoners.

“Well, David, my lad,” said my grandfather when he had finished his strange story, “it’s almost like getting thee back from the dead to have thee in the old home again!”

Chapter 11

On the Rock

About a fortnight after my father arrived, we were surprised one Monday morning by another visit from old Mr. Davis. His son-in-law had asked him to come to tell my grandfather that he had received a letter with regard to the little girl who was saved from the Victory. So he told my father and me as we stood on the pier; and all the way to the house I was wondering what the letter could be.

Timpey was running by my side, her little hand in mine, and I could not bear to think how dull we should be when she was gone.

“Why, it’s surely Mr. Davis,” said my grandfather as he rose to meet the old gentleman.

“Yes,” said he, “it is Mr. Davis; and I suppose you can guess what I’ve come for.”

“Not to take our little sunbeam, sir,” said my grandfather, taking Timpey in his arms. “You never mean to say you’re going to take her away?”

“Wait a bit,” said the old gentleman, sitting down and fumbling in his pocket. “Wait until you’ve heard this letter, and then see what you think about her going.”

And he began to read as follows:

MY DEAR SIR,

I am almost overpowered with joy by the news received by telegram an hour ago. We had heard of the loss of the *Victory*, and were mourning for our little darling as being amongst the number of those drowned. Her mother has been quite crushed by her loss, and has been dangerously ill ever since the sad intelligence reached us.

Need I tell you what our feelings were when we suddenly heard that our dear child was alive, and well, and happy!

We shall sail by the next steamer for England to claim our little darling. My wife is hardly strong enough to travel this week, or we should come at once. A thousand thanks to the brave men who saved our little girl. I shall hope soon to be able to thank them myself. My heart is too full to write much today.

Our child was traveling home under the care of a friend, as we wished her to leave India before the hot weather set in, and I was not able to leave for two months. This accounts for the name Villiers not being on the list of passengers on board the *Victory*.

Thanking you most sincerely for all your efforts to let us know of our child's safety.

I remain, yours very truly,

EDWARD VILLIERS

"Now," said the old gentleman, looking at me and laughing, though I saw a tear in his eye, "won't you let them have her?"

"Well, to be sure," said my grandfather, "what can one say after that? Poor things, how pleased they are!"

"Timpey," I said, taking the little girl on my knee, "who do you think is coming to see you? Your mother is coming—coming to see little Timpey!"

The child looked earnestly at me; she evidently had not quite forgotten the name. She opened her blue eyes wider than usual and looked very thoughtful for a minute or two. Then she nodded her head very wisely, and said, "Dear mother coming to see Timpey?"

"Bless her!" said the old gentleman, stroking her fair little head. "She seems to know all about it."

Then we sat down to breakfast; and whilst we were eating it, old Mr. Davis turned to me and asked if I had read the little piece of paper.

"Yes, sir," said my grandfather, "indeed, we have read it;" and he told him about Jem Millar and what he had said to me that last morning. "And now," said my grandfather, "I wish, if you'd be so kind, you would tell me how to get on the Rock, for I'm on the sand now; there's no doubt at all about it, and I'm afraid, as you said the last time you were here, that it won't stand the storm."

"It would be a sad thing," said old Mr. Davis, "to be on the sand when the great storm comes."

"Ay, sir, it would," said my grandfather; "I often lie in bed at nights and think of it, when the winds and the waves are raging. I call to mind that verse where it talks about the sea and the waves roaring and men's hearts failing them for fear. Deary me, I should be terrible frightened, that I should, if that day was to come, and I saw the Lord coming in glory."

"But you need not be afraid if you are on the Rock," said our old friend. "All who have come to Christ, and are resting on

Him, will feel as safe in that day as you do when there is a storm raging and you are inside this house.”

“Yes,” said my grandfather, “I see that, sir; but somehow I don’t know what you mean by getting on the Rock; I don’t quite see it, sir.”

“Well,” said Mr. Davis, “what would you do if this house was built on the sand down there by the shore, and you knew that the very first storm that came would sweep it away?”

“Do, sir!” said my grandfather. “Why, I should pull it down, every stone of it, and build it up on the rock instead.”

“Exactly!” said Mr. Davis. “You have been building your hopes of heaven on the sand—on your good deeds, on your good intentions, on all sorts of sand-heaps. You know you have.”

“Yes,” said Grandfather, “I know I have.”

Well, my friend,” said Mr. Davis, “pull them all down. Say to yourself, ‘I’m a lost man if I remain as I am; my hopes are all resting on the sand.’ And then, build your hopes on something better, something which will stand the storm; build them on Christ. He is the only way to heaven. He has died that you, a poor sinner, might go there. Build your hopes on Him, my friend. Trust to what He has done for you as your only hope of heaven—that is building on the Rock!”

“I see, sir; I understand you now.”

“Do that,” said Mr. Davis, “and then your hope will be a sure and steadfast hope, a good hope which can never be moved. And when the last great storm comes, it will not touch you; you will be as certainly and as entirely safe in that day as you are in this lighthouse when the storm is raging outside because you will be built upon the immovable Rock.”

I cannot recollect all the conversation which Mr. Davis and my grandfather had that morning, but I do remember that before he went away he knelt down with us and prayed that we might every one of us be found on the Rock in that last great storm.

And I remember also that that night, when my grandfather said good night to me, he said, "Alick, my lad, I don't mean to go to sleep tonight till I can say, like poor Jem Millar,

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,

All other ground is sinking sand."

And I believe that my grandfather kept his word.

Chapter 12

The Sunbeam Claimed

It was a cold, cheerless morning; the wind was blowing, and the rain was beating against the windows. It was far too wet and stormy for little Timpey to be out, so she and I played a game of ball together in the kitchen whilst my father and grandfather went down to the pier.

She looked such a pretty little thing that morning. She had on a little blue frock, which my grandfather had bought for her, and which Mrs. Millar had made before she left the island, and a clean white pinafore. She was screaming with delight as I threw the ball over her head and she ran to catch it, when the door opened, and my father ran in.

"Alick, is she here? They've come!"

"Whofve come, Father?" I said.

"Little Timpey's father and mother; they are coming up the garden now with your grandfather!"

He had hardly finished speaking before my grandfather came in with a lady and gentleman.

The lady ran forward as soon as she saw her child, put her arms round her, and held her tightly in her bosom, as if she could never part from her again. Then she sat down with

her little darling on her knee, stroking her tiny hands and talking to her and looking, oh, so anxiously, to see if the child remembered her.

At first, Timpey looked a little shy, and hung down her head, and would not look in her mother's face. But this was only for a minute. As soon as her mother spoke to her, she evidently remembered her voice, and Mrs. Villiers asked her, with tears in her eyes, "Do you know me, little Timpey? My dear little Timpey, who am I?"

The child looked up and smiled as she said, "Dear mother—Timpey's dear mother!" and she put up her little fat hand to stroke her mother's face.

And then, when I saw that, I could feel no longer sorry that the child was going away.

I can well remember what a happy morning that was. Mr. and Mrs. Villiers were so kind to us and so very grateful for all that my grandfather and I had done for their little girl. They thought her looking so much better and stronger than when she left India, and they were so pleased to find that she had not forgotten all the little lessons she had learned at home.

Mrs. Villiers seemed as if she could not take her eyes off the child; wherever little Timpey went, and whatever she was doing, her mother followed her, and I shall never forget how happy and how glad both the father and the mother looked.

But the most pleasant day will come to an end; and in the evening a boat was to come from shore to take Mr. and Mrs. Villiers and their child away.

"Dear me!" said my grandfather with a groan, as he took the little girl on his knee. "I never felt so sorry to lose anybody,

never; I'm sure I didn't. Why, I call her my little sunbeam, sir! You'll excuse me saying so, but I don't feel over and above kindly to you for taking her away from me; I don't indeed, sir."

"Then I don't know what you will say to me when you hear I want to rob you further," said Mr. Villiers.

"Rob me further?" repeated my grandfather.

"Yes," said Mr. Villiers, putting his hand on my shoulder. "I want to take this grandson of yours away, too. It seems to me a great pity that such a fine lad should waste his days shut up on this little island. Let him come with me, and I will send him to a really good school for three or four years, and then I will get him some good clerkship, or something of that kind, and put him in the way of making his way in the world. Now then, my friend, will you and his father spare him?"

"Well," said my grandfather, "I don't know what to say to you, sir; it's very good of you—very good, indeed it is, and it would be a fine thing for Alick, it would indeed; but I always thought he would take my place here when I was dead."

"Yes," said my father; "but, you see, I shall be here to do that, Father; and if Mr. Villiers is so very kind as to take Alick, I'm sure we ought only to be too glad for him to have such a friend."

"You're right, David; yes, you're right. We mustn't be selfish, sir; and you'd let him come and see us sometimes, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, to be sure," said Mr. Villiers. "He can come and spend his holidays here and give you fine histories of his school life. Now, Alick, what say you?"

I looked at him as he continued, saying, "There's a capital school in the town where we are going to live, so you would be near us, and you could come to see us on holiday afternoons,

and see whether this little woman remembers all you have taught her. What say you?"

I was very pleased indeed and very thankful for his kindness, and my father and grandfather said they would never be able to repay him.

"Repay me!" said Mr. Villiers. "Why, my friends, it's I who can never repay you. Just think, for one moment, of what you have given me," and he put his arm round his little girl's neck. "So we may consider that matter settled. And now, when can Alick come?"

My grandfather begged for another month, and Mr. Villiers said that would do very well, as in that time the school would reopen after the holidays.

And so I said goodbye to little Timpey that afternoon with the hope of soon seeing her again.

Her father called her Lucy, which I found was her real name. Timpey was a pet name, which had been given her as a baby. But though Lucy was certainly a prettier name, still I felt I should always think of her as Timpey—my little Timpey.

I shall never forget my feelings that month. A strange new life was opening out before me, and I felt quite bewildered by the prospect.

My grandfather and father and I sat over the watchroom fire, night after night, talking over my future; and day after day I wandered over our dear little island, wondering how I should feel when I said goodbye to it and went into the great world beyond.

Since old Mr. Davis's visit, there had been a great change in our little home. The great Bible had been taken down from its place and carefully read and studied, and Sunday was no longer

spent by us like any other day, but was kept as well as it could be on that lonely island.

My grandfather, I felt sure, was a new man. Old things had passed away; all things had become new. He was dearer to me than ever, and I felt very sorrowful when I thought of parting from him.

"I could never have left you, Grandfather," I said one day, "if my father had not been here."

"No," he said, "I don't think I could have spared you, Alick; but your father just came back right in time—didn't you, David?"

At last the day arrived on which Mr. Villiers had appointed to meet me at the town to which the steamer went every Monday morning when it left the island. My father and grandfather walked with me down to the pier and saw me on board. And the very last thing my grandfather said to me was, "Alick, my lad, keep on the Rock—be sure you keep on the Rock!"

And I trust that I have never forgotten my grandfather's last words to me.

"It was founded upon a rock."

The End

Excerpts From

When I Was
Your Age

An Autobiography
By Laura E. Richards

Edited by Jenny Phillips

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Excerpts From When I Was Your Age

Section 1

There were five of us. There had been six, but the Beautiful Boy was taken home to heaven while he was still very little; and it was good for the rest of us to know that there was always one to wait for and welcome us in the Place of Light to which we should go some day. So, as I said, there were five of us here—Julia Romana, Florence, Harry, Laura, and Maud. Julia was the eldest. She took her second name from the ancient city in which she was born, and she was as beautiful as a soft Italian evening, with dark hair, clear gray eyes, perfect features, and a complexion of such pure and wonderful red and white as I have never seen in any other face. She had a look as if when she came away from heaven she had been allowed to remember it, while others must forget. She walked in a dream always, of beauty and poetry, thinking of strange things. Very shy she was, very sensitive. When Flossy (this was Florence's home name) called her "a great red-haired giant," she wept bitterly, and reproached her sister for hurting her feelings.

Julia knew everything, according to the belief of the younger children. She it was who led the famous before-breakfast walks,

when we used to start off at six o'clock and walk to the yellow house at the top of the long hill, or sometimes even to the windmill beyond it, where we could see the miller at work, all white and dusty, and watch the white sails moving slowly round.

And on the way Julia told us stories, from Sir Walter Scott or Shakespeare; or she gave us the plot of some opera, with snatches of song here and there.

Julia wrote stories herself, too—very wonderful stories, we all thought, and, indeed, I think so still. She began when she was a little girl, not more than six or seven years old. There lies beside me now on the table a small book, about five inches square, bound in faded pink and green, and filled from cover to cover with writing in a cramped, childish hand. It is a book of novels and plays, written by our Julia before she was ten years old; and I often think that the beautiful and helpful things she wrote in her later years were hardly more remarkable than these queer little stories.

Flossy was very small as a child. One day a lady, not knowing that the little girl was within hearing, said to her mother, "What a pity Flossy is so small!"

"I'm big inside," cried a little, angry voice at her elbow. There was Flossy, swelling with rage. And she was big inside! Her lively, active spirit seemed to break through the little body and carry it along in spite of itself. Sometimes it was an impish spirit; always it was an enterprising one. She it was who invented the dances which seemed to us such wonderful performances. We danced every evening in the great parlor, our mother playing for us on the piano.

Flossy invented many other amusements, too. There was the school-loan system. We had school in the little parlor at that

time, and our desks had lids that lifted up. In her desk Flossy kept a number of precious things, which she lent to the younger children for so many pins an hour. The most valuable thing was a set of three colored worsted balls, red, green, and blue. You could set them twirling, and they would keep going for ever so long. It was a delightful sport; but they were very expensive, costing, I think, twenty pins an hour. It took a long time to collect twenty pins, for of course it was not fair to take them out of the pincushions.

Flossy also told stories; or rather she told one story which had no end, and of which we never tired.

Julia and Flossy did not content themselves with writing plays and telling stories. They aspired to making a language—a real language, which should be all their own, and should have grammars and dictionaries like any other famous tongue. It was called Patagonian—whether with any idea of future missionary work among the people of that remote country, or merely because it sounded well, I cannot say. It was a singular language. I wish more of it had survived, but I can give only a few of its more familiar phrases.

MILLDAM - Yes.

PILLDAM - No.

MOUCHE - Mother.

BIS VON SNOUT? - Are you well?

CHING CHU STICK STUMPS? - Will you have some doughnuts?

These fragments will, I am sure, make my readers regret deeply the loss of this language, which has the merit of entire originality.



At the age of six, Harry determined to marry, and offered his hand and heart to Mary, the nurse, an excellent woman some thirty years older than he. He sternly forbade her to sew or do other nursery work, saying that his wife must not work for her living. About this time, too, he told our mother that he thought he felt his beard growing.

He was just two years older than Laura, and the tie between them was very close. Laura's first question to a stranger was always, "Does you know my bulla Hally? I hope you does!" And she was truly sorry for any one who had not that privilege.

The two children slept in tiny rooms adjoining each other. It was both easy and pleasant to "talk across" while lying in bed, when they were supposed to be sound asleep. Neither liked to give up the last word of greeting, and they would sometimes say "Good night!" "Good night!" over and over, backward and forward, for ten minutes together. In general, Harry was very kind to Laura, playing with her, and protecting her from any roughness of neighbor children. But truth compels me to tell of one occasion on which Harry did not show a brotherly spirit. In the garden under a great birch tree, stood a trough for watering the horses. It was a large and deep trough, and always full of beautiful, clear water. It was pleasant to lean over the edge and see the sky and the leaves of the tree reflected as if in a crystal mirror, to see one's own rosy, freckled face, too, and make other faces, to see which could open eyes or mouth widest.

Now one day as little Laura, being perhaps four years old, was hanging over the edge of the trough, forgetful of all save the delight of gazing, it chanced that Harry came up behind her; and the spirit of mischief that was always in him triumphed

over brotherly affection, and he “ups with her heels, and smothers her squeals” in the clear, cold water.

Laura came up gasping and puffing, her hair streaming all over her round face, her eyes staring with wonder and fright!

By the time help arrived, as it fortunately did, in the person of Thomas the gardener, poor Laura was in a deplorable condition, half choked with water, and frightened nearly out of her wits.

Thomas carried the dripping child to the house and put her into Mary’s kind arms, and then reported to our mother what Harry had done.

We were almost never whipped, but for this misdeed Harry was put to bed at once; and our mother, sitting beside him, gave him what we used to call a “talking to,” which he did not soon forget.



Not many children can boast of having two homes; some, alas, have hardly one! But we actually had two abiding places, both of which were so dear to us that we loved them equally. First, there was Green Peace. When our mother first came to the place and saw the fair garden and the house with its lawn and its shadowing trees, she gave it this name, half in sport; and the title clung to it always.

The house itself was pleasant. The original building, nearly two hundred years old, was low and squat, with low-studded rooms, and great posts in the corners, and small many-paned windows. . . . But, after all, we did not stay in the house much. Why should we, with the garden calling us out with its thousand voices? On one side of the house lay an oval lawn, green as emerald. One lawn had the laburnum-tree, where at the right

time of year we sat under a shower of fragrant gold; the other had the three hawthorn-trees, one with white blossoms, another with pink, and a third with deep red, rose-like flowers. Other trees were there, but I do not remember them. Directly in front of the house stood two giant Balm-of-Gilead trees, towering over the low-roofed dwelling. These trees were favorites of ours, for at a certain time they dropped down to us thousands and thousands of sticky catkins, full of the most charming, silky cotton. We called them the “cottonwool-trees,” and loved them tenderly. Then, between the trees, a flight of steps plunged down to the greenhouse. A curious place this was—summer house, hothouse, and bowling alley, all in one. . . . Here the air was soft and balmy, and full of the smell of roses. One went down two steps, and there were the roses themselves! Great vines trained along the walls, heavy with long white or yellow or teacolored buds—I remember no red ones. Mr. Arrow, the gardener, never let us touch the roses, and he never gave us a bud; but when a rose was fully open, showing its golden heart, he would often pick it for us, with a sigh, but a kind look, too.

Midway in the long glass-covered building was a tiny oval pond, lined with green moss. I think it once had goldfish in it, but they did not thrive. When Mr. Arrow was gone to dinner, it was pleasant to fill the brass syringe with water from this pond, and squirt at the roses, and feel the heavy drops splashing back in one’s upturned face. Sometimes a child fell into the pond; but as the water was only four or five inches deep, no harm was done, save to stockings and petticoats.

The bowling alley was divided by a low partition from the hothouse, so that when we went to play at planets, we breathed the same soft, perfumed air. The planets were the balls. The

biggest one was Uranus; then came Saturn, and so on down to Mercury, a little dot of a ball. They were of some dark, hard, foreign wood, very smooth, with a dusky polish. It was a great delight to roll them, either over the smooth floor, against the ninepins, or along the rack at the side. When one rolled Uranus or Jupiter, it sounded like thunder. Then, the musical tinkle of the pins, as they clinked and fell together!

Below, and on both sides of the greenhouse, the fertile ground was set thick with fruit trees, our father's special pride. The pears and peaches were known far and wide; I have never seen such peaches since, nor is it only the halo of childish recollection that shines around them, for others bear the same testimony. Crimson-glowing, golden-hearted, smooth and perfect as a baby's cheek, each one was a thing of wonder and beauty; and when you ate one, you ate summer and sunshine.

The time of our summer flitting varied. Sometimes we stayed at Green Peace till after strawberry time. Sometimes we went early and came back in time for the peaches. But in one month or another, there came a season of great business and bustle. Woolen dresses were put away in the great cedar-lined camphor-chests studded with brass nails; calico dresses were lengthened, and joyfully assumed; trunks were packed, and boxes and barrels; carpets were taken up and laid away; and white covers were put over pictures and mirrors. Finally we departed, generally in more or less confusion.

In those days the railway ran no farther than Fall River. There we must take a carriage and drive twelve miles to our home in the Island of Rest. Twelve long and weary miles they were, much dreaded by us all. The trip was made in a large old-fashioned vehicle, half hack, half stage. The red cushions

were hard and uncomfortable; the horses were aged. So we five children were cramped and cooped up, I know not how long. It seemed hours that we must sit there, while the ancient horses crawled up the sandy hills, or jogged meditatively along the level spaces. Every joint developed a separate ache; our legs were cramped—the short ones from hanging over the seat, the long ones because the floor of the coach was piled with baskets and bandboxes. It was hot, hot! The flies buzzed, and would not let one go to sleep; the dust rolled in thick yellow clouds from under the wheels and filled eyes and mouth and set all a-sneezing. Decidedly, it was a most tiresome jaunt. But all the more delightful was the arrival! To drive in under the apple-trees, just as the evening was falling cool and sweet, to tumble out of the stuffy prison-coach, and race through the orchard, and out to the barn, and up the hill behind the house—ah, that was worth all the miseries of the journey!

From the hill behind the house we could see the sunset; and that was one thing we did not have at Green Peace, shut in by its great trees. Here, before our eyes, still aching from the dust of the road, lay the great bay, all a sheet of silver, with white sails here and there; beyond it Conanicut, a long island, brown in the noon-light, now softened into wonderful shades of amethyst and violet; and the great sun going down in a glory of gold and flame! Nowhere else are such sunsets. Sometimes the sky was all strewn with fiery flakes and long delicate flame-feathers, glowing with rosy light; sometimes there were purple cloud-islands, edged with crimson, and between them and the real island a space of delicate green, so pure, so cold, that there is nothing to compare with it save a certain chrysoprase our mother had.

Gazing at these wonders, the children would stand, full of vague delight, not knowing what they thought, till the tea-bell summoned them to the house for a merry picnic supper. Then there was clattering upstairs, washing of hands in the great basin with purple grapes on it (it belonged in the guestchamber, and we were not allowed to use it save on special occasions like this), hasty smoothing of hair and straightening of collars, and then clatter! Clatter! Down again.

There was nothing remarkable about the house at the Valley. It was just a pleasant cottage, with plenty of sunny windows and square, comfortable rooms. But we were seldom in the house, save at mealtimes or when it rained. Our real home was under the blue sky. First, there was the orchard. It was an ideal orchard, with the queerest old apple trees that ever were seen. They did not bear many apples, but they were delightful to climb in, with trunks slanting so that one could easily run up them, and branches that curled round so as to make a comfortable back to lean against. There are few pleasanter things than to sit in an apple tree and read poetry, with birds twittering undismayed beside you, and green leaves whispering over your head. Laura was generally doing this when she ought to have been mending her stockings.

Then there was the joggling-board, under the two biggest trees. The delight of a joggling-board is hardly to be explained to children who have never known it; but I trust many children do know it. The board is long and smooth and springy, supported at both ends on stands; and one can play all sorts of things on it. Many a circus has been held on the board at the Valley! We danced the tight-rope on it; we leaped through imaginary rings, coming down on the tips of our toes; we

hopped its whole length on one foot; we wriggled along it on our stomachs, on our backs; we bumped along it on hands and knees. Dear old joggling-board! It is not probable that any other was ever quite so good as ours.

Near by was the pump, a never-failing wonder to us when we were little. The well over which it stood was very deep, and it took a long time to bring the bucket up. It was a chain-pump, and the chain went rattlety-clank! Rattlety-clank! Round and round; and the handle creaked and groaned. When you had turned a good while, there came out of the spout a stream of—water? No! Daddy-longlegs. They lived, apparently, in the spout, and they did not like the water; so when they heard the bucket coming up, with the water going “lip! lap!” as it swung to and fro, they came running out, dozens and dozens of them, probably thinking what unreasonable people we were to disturb them. When the water did finally come, it was wonderfully cold, and clear as crystal.

The hill behind the house was perhaps our favorite playroom. It was a low, rocky hill, covered with “prostrate juniper” bushes, which bore blue berries very useful in our housekeeping. At the top of the rise, the bare rock cropped out, dark gray, covered with flat, dry lichens. This was our house. It had several rooms: the drawing room was really palatial—a broad floor of rock, with flights of steps leading up to it. The state stairway was used for kings and queens, conquerors, and the like; the smaller was really more convenient, as the steps were more sharply defined, and you were not so apt to fall down them. Then there was the dining room rock, where meals were served—daisy pudding and similar delicacies—and the kitchen rock, which had a real oven and the most charming cupboards imaginable. Here were

stored hollyhock cheeses' and sorrel leaves and twigs of black birch, fragrant and spicy, and many other good things.

Excerpts From When I Was Your Age

Section 2

Almost every morning we went down to the bay to bathe. It was a walk of nearly a mile through the fields—such a pleasant walk! The fields were not green, but of a soft russet [yellowish or reddish-brown], the grass being thin and dry, with great quantities of a little pinkish fuzzy plant whose name we never knew. They were divided by stone walls, which we were skillful in climbing. In some places there were bars which must be let down, or climbed over, or crawled through, as fancy suggested. There were many blackberries, of the lowbush variety, bearing great clusters of berries, glossy, beautiful, delicious. We were not allowed to eat them on the way down, but only when coming home. At last the shore was reached, and soon we were all in the clear water, shrieking with delight, paddling about, puffing and blowing like a school of young porpoises.

At high-tide the beach was pebbled; at low-tide we went far out, the ground sloping very gradually, to a delightful place where the bottom was of fine white sand, sparkling as if mixed with diamond dust. Starfish crawled about on it, and other creatures—crabs, too, sometimes, that would nip an unwary toe

if they got a chance. Sometimes the water was full of jellyfish, which we did not like, in spite of their beauty. Beyond the white sand was a bed of eel-grass, very dreadful, not to be approached. If a person went into it, he was instantly seized and entangled and drowned before the eyes of his companions. This was our firm belief. It was probably partly due to Andersen's story of the "Little Sea-Maid," which had made a deep impression on us all, with its clutching polyps and other submarine terrors.

We all learned to swim more or less, but Flossy was the best swimmer.

Sometimes we went to bathe in the afternoon instead of the morning, if the tide suited better. I remember one such time when we came delightfully near having an adventure. It was a full moon, and the tide was very high. We had loitered along the beach after our bath, gathering mussels to boil for tea, picking up gold-shells or scallop shells, and punching seaweed bladders, which pop charmingly if you do them right.

German Mary, the good nurse who was supposed to be taking care of us, knew nothing about tides; and when we came back to the little creek which we must cross on leaving the beach, lo! The creek was a deep, broad stream, the like of which we had never seen. What was to be done? Valiant Flossy proposed to swim across and get help, but Mary shrieked and would not hear of it, and we all protested that it was impossible. Then we perceived that we must spend the night on the beach; and when we were once accustomed to the idea, it was not without attraction for us. The sand was warm and dry and full of shells and pleasant things; it was August, and the night would be just cool enough for comfort after the hot day; we had a pailful of blackberries, which we had picked on the way down,

meaning to eat them during our homeward walk; Julia could tell us stories. Altogether it would be a very pleasant occasion. And then to think of the romance of it! "The Deserted Children!" "Alone on a Sandbank!" "The Watchers of the Tide!" There was no end to the things that could be made out of it. So, though poor Mary wept and wrung her hands, mindful (which I cannot remember that we were) of our mother waiting for us at home, we were all very happy.

The sun went down in golden state. Then, turning to the land, we watched the moon rising, in softer radiance, but no less wonderful and glorious. Slowly the great orb rose, turning from pale gold to purest silver. The sea darkened, and presently a little wind came up and began to sing with the murmuring waves. We sang, too, some of the old German student-songs which our mother had taught us.

Then Julia told us a story. But it must have been about this time that we were hailed from the opposite side of the creek; and presently a boat was run out and came over to the sand beach and took us off. The people at the Poor Farm, which was on a hill close by, had seen the group of Crusoes and come to our rescue. They greeted us with words of pity (which were quite unnecessary), rowed us to the shore, and then kindly harnessed the farm-horse and drove us home. German Mary was loud in her thanks and expressions of relief; our mother also was grateful to the good people; but from us they received scant and grudging thanks. If they had only let us alone, we could have spent the night on a sandbank. Now it was not likely that we ever should! And, indeed, we never did.



There is so much to tell about our father that I hardly know where to begin. First, you must know something of his appearance. He was tall and very erect, with the carriage and walk of a soldier. His hair was black, with silver threads in it; his eyes were of the deepest and brightest blue I ever saw. They were eyes full of light: to us it was the soft, beaming light of love and tenderness, but sometimes to others it was the flash of a sword. He was very handsome; in his youth he had been thought one of the handsomest men of his day. It was a gallant time, this youth of our father. When hardly more than a lad, he went out to help the brave Greeks who were fighting to free their country from the cruel yoke of the Turks. At an age when most young men were thinking how they could make money and how they could best advance themselves in the world, our father thought only how he could do most good, be of most help to others. So he went out to Greece, and fought in many a battle beside the brave mountaineers. Dressed like them in the "snowy chemise and the shaggy capote," he shared their toils and their hardships; slept, rolled in his cloak, under the open stars, or sat over the camp-fire, roasting wasps strung on a stick like dried cherries. The old Greek chieftains called him "the beautiful youth" and loved him. Once he saved the life of a wounded Greek, at the risk of his own, and the rescued man followed him afterward like a dog, not wishing to lose sight of him for an hour, and would even sleep at his feet at night. . . .

When our father saw the terrible sufferings of the Greek women and children, who were starving while their husbands and fathers were fighting for life and freedom, he thought that he could help best by helping them; so, though I know he loved the fighting, for he was a born soldier, he came back to

this country and told all that he had seen and asked for money and clothes and food for the perishing wives and mothers and children. He told the story well and put his whole heart into it, and people listen to a story so told. Many hearts beat in answer to his, and in a short time he sailed for Greece again, with a good ship full of rice and flour, and cloth to make into garments, and money to buy whatever else might be needed. When he landed in Greece, the women came flocking about him by thousands, crying for bread and praying God to bless him. He felt blessed enough when he saw the children eating bread and saw the naked backs covered and the sad, hungry faces smiling again. So he went about doing good and helping whenever he saw need. Perhaps many a poor woman may have thought that the beautiful youth was almost like an angel sent by God to relieve her, and she may not have been far wrong.

When the war was over, and Greece was a free country, our father came home and looked about him again to see what he could do to help others. He talked with a friend of his, Dr. Fisher, and they decided that they would give their time to helping the blind, who needed help greatly. There were no schools for them in those days, and if a child was blind, it must sit with folded hands and learn nothing.

Our father found several blind children and took them to his home and taught them. By and by some kind friends gave money, and one—Colonel Perkins—gave a fine house to be a school for these children and others; and that was the beginning of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, now a great school where many blind boys and girls learn to read and study, and to play on various instruments, and to help themselves and others in the world.

Our father always said, "Help people to help themselves; don't accustom them to being helped by others." Another saying of his, perhaps his favorite one, next to the familiar "Let justice be done, if the heavens fall" was this: "Obstacles are things to be overcome." Indeed, this was one of the governing principles of his life; and there were few obstacles that did not go down before that keen lance of his, always in rest and ready for a charge.

When our father first began his work in philanthropy, some of his friends used to laugh at him. Especially was this the case when he took up the cause of the idiotic and weak-minded, and vowed that instead of being condemned to live like animals, and be treated as such, they should have their rights as human beings, and should be taught all the more carefully and tenderly because their minds were weak and helpless.

"What do you think Howe is going to do now?" cried one gentleman to another, merrily. "He is going to teach the idiots, ha, ha, ha!" And they both laughed heartily, and thought it a very good joke. But people soon ceased to laugh when they saw the helpless creatures beginning to help themselves, saw the girls learning to sew and the boys to work, saw light gradually come into the vacant eyes (dim and uncertain light it might be, but how much better than blank darkness!), and strength and purpose to the nerveless fingers.

So the School for Feeble-Minded Children was founded and has been ever since a pleasant place, full of hope and cheer.

All my readers have probably heard about Laura Bridgman, whom he found a little child, deaf, dumb, and blind, knowing no more than an animal, and how he taught her to read and write, to talk with her fingers, and to become an earnest,

thoughtful, industrious woman. It is a wonderful story; but it has already been told, and will soon be still more fully told, so I will not dwell upon it now.

But I hope you will all read, someday, a *Life of Our Father*, and learn about all the things he did, for it needs a whole volume to tell them.

But it is especially because he was our father that I want to describe this great and good man. I suppose there never was a tenderer or kinder father. He liked to make companions of his children, and was never weary of having us “tagging” at his heels. We followed him about the garden like so many little dogs, watching the pruning or grafting, which were his special tasks. We followed him up into the wonderful pear-room, where were many chests of drawers, every drawer full of pears lying on cotton-wool. Our father watched their ripening with careful heed and told us many things about their growth and habits.

I cannot remember that our father was ever out of patience when we pulled his things about. He had many delightful stories—one of “Jacky Nory,” which had no end, and went on and on, through many a walk and garden prowl.

He loved to play and romp with us. Sometimes he would put on his great fur-coat and come into the dining room at dancing time, on all fours, growling horribly, and pursue us into corners, we shrieking with delighted terror. Or he would sing for us, sending us into fits of laughter, for he had absolutely no ear for music.

If our father had no ear for music, he had a fine one for meter, and read poetry aloud very beautifully. His voice was melodious and ringing, and we were thrilled with his own enthusiasm as he read to us from his favorite poets.

I must not leave the subject of reading without speaking of his reading of the Bible, which was most impressive. No one who ever heard him read morning prayers at the Institution (which he always did until his health failed in later years) can have forgotten the grave, melodious voice, the reverent tone, the majestic head bent above the sacred book. Nor was it less impressive when on Sunday afternoons he read to us, his children. He would have us read, too, allowing us to choose our favorite psalms or other passages.

He was an early riser, and often shared our morning walks. Each child, as soon as it was old enough, was taught to ride; and the rides before breakfast with him are things never to be forgotten. He took one child at a time, so that all in turn might have the pleasure.



This is only a very small portion of *When I Was Your Age*. If you liked the excerpts, you would love the whole book! It can be read for free on archive.org.

Queen Hildegarde

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Edited by Jenny Phillips

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Chapter 1

Hildegarde Graham



have a little plan, which I should like very much to carry out, if you fully approve of it," said Mrs. Graham to her husband. "I know what I would like to do with Hilda when we go to California."

Mr. Graham has been called suddenly to administer the estate of a cousin who had recently died, and Mrs. Graham was to accompany her husband for an extended stay to offer sympathy and help the widow who was invalid with three little children. Hilda, the Graham's daughter, believed she was going with them, but Mrs. Graham had a different plan. What the plan was, we shall see by and by. Meanwhile, let us take a peep at Hilda, or Hildegardis, as she sits in her own room, all unconscious of the plot which is hatching in the parlor below.

She is a tall girl of fifteen. Probably, she has attained her full height, for she looks as if she had been growing too fast; her form is slender, her face pale with a weary look in the large gray eyes. It is a delicate, high-bred face, with a pretty nose, slightly "tip-tilted," and a beautiful mouth; but it is half-spoiled by the expression, which is discontented, if not actually peevish. If we lifted the light curling locks of fair hair that lie on her

forehead, we should see a very decided frown on a broad white space which ought to be absolutely smooth. Why should a girl of fifteen frown, especially a girl so “exceptionally fortunate” as all her friends considered Hilda Graham? Certainly her surroundings at this moment are pretty enough to satisfy any girl. Her room is not large, but it has a sunny bay-window which seems to increase its size twofold. In refurnishing it a year before, her father had in mind Hilda’s favorite flower, the forget-me-not, and the room is simply a bower of forget-me-nots. Scattered over the dull olive ground of the carpet, clustering and nodding from the wallpaper, peeping from the folds of the curtains, the forget-me-nots are everywhere. Even the creamy surface of the toilet-jug and bowl, even the ivory backs of the brushes that lie on the blue-covered toilet table, bear each its cluster of pale-blue blossoms. The low easy-chair in which the girl is reclining, and the pretty sofa with its plump cushions inviting to repose, repeat the same tale. The tale is again repeated, though in a different way, by a scroll running round the top of the wall, on which in letters of blue and gold is written at intervals phrases in French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, of all which tongues Hilda’s father possessed knowledge.

Is not this indeed a bower, wherein a girl ought to be happy? The bird in the window thinks his blue and gold cage the finest house in the world, and he sings as heartily and cheerily as if he had been in the wide green forest; but his mistress does not sing. She sits in the easy-chair, with a book upside down in her lap, and frowns—actually frowns, in a forget-me-not bower! There is not much the matter, really. Her head aches, that is all. Her German lesson had been longer and harder than usual, and

her father was quite right about the caramels; there is a box of them on the table now, within easy reach of the slim white hand with its forget-me-not ring of blue turquoises.

As I said before, Hilda had no suspicion of the plot her parents were concocting. She knew that her father was obliged to go to San Francisco, being called suddenly to administer the estate of a cousin who had recently died there, and that her mother and—as she supposed—herself were going with him to offer sympathy and help to the widow, an invalid with three little children. As to the idea of her being left behind—of her father's starting off on a long journey without his lieutenant-general, of her mother's parting from her only child, whom she had watched with tender care and anxiety since the day of her birth—such a thought never came into Hilda's mind. Wherever her parents went she went, as a matter of course. So it had always been, and so without doubt it always would be. She did not care specially about going to California at this season of the year. In fact, she had told her bosom friend, Madge Everton, only the day before, that it was “rather a bore,” and that she should have preferred to go to Newport. “But what can I do?” she added, with the slightest shrug of her pretty shoulders. “Papa and Mamma really must go, it appears; so, of course, I must go, too.”

“A bore!” repeated Madge energetically, replying to the first part of her friend's remarks. “Hilda, what a very singular girl you are! Here I, or Nelly, or any of the other girls would give both our ears, and our front teeth too, to make such a trip; and just because you can go, you sit there and call it ‘a bore!’” And Madge shook her black curls and opened wide eyes of indignation and wonder at our ungrateful heroine. “I only

wish," she added, "that you and I could be changed into each other, just for this summer."

"I wish—" began Hilda; but she checked herself in her response to the wish, as the thought of Madge's five brothers rose in her mind (Hilda could not endure boys!). She looked attentively at the toe of her little bronze slipper for a few moments, and then she changed the subject by proposing a walk. "Console yourself with the caramels, my fiery Madge," she said, pushing the box across the table, "while I put on my boots. We will go to Maillard's store and get some more while we are out. His caramels are decidedly better than Huyler's; don't you think so?"

A very busy woman was pretty Mrs. Graham during the next two weeks. First, she made an expedition into the country "to see an old friend," she said, and was gone two whole days. And after that she was out every morning, driving hither and thither, from shop to dressmaker, from dressmaker to milliner, from milliner to shoemaker.

"It is a sad thing," Mr. Graham would say, when his wife fluttered in to lunch, breathless and exhausted and half an hour late (she, the most punctual of women!)—"it is a sad thing to have married a comet by mistake, thinking it was a woman. How did you find the other planets this morning, my dear? Is it true that Saturn has lost one of his rings?"

Hilda thought nothing of her father's remarks—Papa was always talking nonsense, and she thought she always understood him perfectly. It did occur to her, however, to wonder at her mother's leaving her out on all her shopping expeditions. Hilda rather prided herself on her skill in matching shades and selecting fabrics, and Mamma was generally glad

of her assistance in all such matters. However, perhaps it was only underclothing and house linen and such things that she was buying. All that was the dull part of shopping. It was the poetry of it that Hilda loved—the shimmer of silk and satin, the rich shadows in velvet, the cool, airy fluttering of muslin and lace. So the girl went on her usual way, finding life a little dull, a little tiresome, and most people rather stupid, but everything on the whole much as usual, if her head only would not ache so; and it was without a shadow of suspicion that she obeyed one morning her mother's summons to come and see her in her dressing room.

Her mother had said a little prayer before she sent the message to Hilda—for she knew that her news would sorely hurt and grieve the child who was half the world to her; and though she did not flinch from the task, she longed for strength and wisdom to do it in the kindest and wisest way.

“Hilda, dear,” she said gently, when they were seated together on the sofa, hand in hand, with each an arm round the other's waist, as they loved best to sit—“Hilda, dear, I have something to say that will not please you; something that may even grieve you very much at first.” She paused, and Hilda rapidly reviewed in her mind all the possibilities that she could think of. Had anything happened to the box of French dresses which was on its way from Paris? Had a careless servant broken her glass case of ferns again? Had Aunt Emily been saying disagreeable things about her, as she was apt to do? She was about to speak, but at that moment, like a thunderbolt, the next words struck her ear: “We have decided not to take you with us to California.” Amazed, wounded, indignant, Hilda could only lift her great gray eyes to meet the soft violet ones, which, full of unshed

tears, were fixed tenderly upon her. Mrs. Graham continued: "Your father and I both feel, my darling, that this long, fatiguing journey, in the full heat of summer, would be the worst possible thing for you. You have not been very well lately, and it is most important that you should lead a quiet, regular, healthy life for the next few months. We have therefore made arrangements to leave you—"

But here Hilda could control herself no longer. "Mamma! Mamma!" she cried. "How can you be so unkind, so cruel? Leave me—you and Papa both? Why, I shall die! Of course I shall die, all alone in this great house. I thought you loved me!" And she burst into tears, half of anger, half of grief, and sobbed bitterly.

"Dear child!" said Mrs. Graham, smoothing the fair hair lovingly, "If you had heard me out, you would have seen that we had no idea of leaving you alone, or of leaving you in this house either. You are to stay with—"

"Not with Aunt Emily!" cried the girl, springing to her feet with flashing eyes. "Mamma, I would rather beg in the streets than stay with Aunt Emily. She is a detestable, ill-natured, selfish woman."

"Hildegarde," said Mrs. Graham gravely, "be silent!" There was a moment of absolute stillness, broken only by the ticking of the little crystal clock on the mantelpiece, and then Mrs. Graham continued: "I must ask you not to speak again, my daughter, until I have finished what I have to say; and even then, I trust you will keep silence until you are able to command yourself. You are to stay with the woman who was my nurse when I was a child, Mrs. Hartley, at her farm near Glenfield. She is a very kind, good woman, and will take the best possible care

of you. I went to the farm myself last week, and found it a lovely place, with every comfort, though no luxuries, save the great one of a free, healthy, natural life. There, my Hilda, we shall leave you, sadly indeed, and yet feeling that you are in good and loving hands. And I feel very sure," she added in a lighter tone, "that by the time we return, you will be a rosy-cheeked country lass, strong and hearty, with no more thought of headaches, and no wrinkle in your forehead." As she ceased speaking, Mrs. Graham drew the girl close to her, and kissed the white brow tenderly, murmuring: "God bless my darling daughter! If she knew how her mother's heart aches at parting with her!" But Hilda did not know. She was too angry, too bewildered, too deeply hurt, to think of anyone except herself. She felt that she could not trust herself to speak, and it was in silence, and without returning her mother's caress, that she rose and sought her own room.

Mrs. Graham looked after her wistfully, tenderly, but made no effort to call her back. The tears trembled in her soft blue eyes, and her lip quivered as she turned to her work table; but she said quietly to herself: "Solitude is a good medicine. The child will do well, and I know that I have chosen wisely for her."

Hildegarde shed bitter tears as she flung herself face downward on her own blue sofa. Angry thoughts surged through her brain. Now she burned with resentment at the parents who could desert her—their only child; now she melted into pity for herself, and wept more and more as she pictured the misery that lay before her. To be left alone—alone!—on a squalid, wretched farm, with a dirty old woman, a woman who had been a servant—she, Hildegardis Graham, the idol of her parents, the queen of her "set" among the young people, the

proudest and most exclusive girl in New York, as she had once (and not with displeasure) heard herself called!

What would Madge Everton, what would all the girls say! How they would laugh to hear of Hilda Graham living on a farm among pigs and hens and dirty people! Oh! It was intolerable; and she sprang up and paced the floor, with burning cheeks and flashing eyes.

The thought of opposing the plan did not occur to her. Mrs. Graham's rule, gentle though it was, was not of the flabby, nor yet of the elastic sort. Her decisions were not hastily arrived at; but once made, they were final and abiding. "You might just as well try to oppose the Gulf Stream!" Mr. Graham would say.

So Hildegarde's first lessons had been in obedience and in truthfulness and these were fairly well learned before she began learning to read. And so she knew now that she might storm and weep as she would in her own room, but that the decree was fixed, and that unless the skies fell, her summer would be passed at Hartley's Glen.

Chapter 2

Dame and Farmer



hen the first shock was over, Hilda was rather glad than otherwise to learn that there was to be no delay in carrying out the odious plan. "The sooner the better," she said to herself. "I certainly don't want to see any of the girls again, and the first plunge will be the worst of it."

"What clothes am I to take?" she asked her mother, in a tone which she mentally considered "quiet and cold," though possibly some people might have called it "sullen."

"Your clothes are already packed, dear," replied Mrs. Graham. "You have only to pack your dressing bag to be all ready for the start tomorrow. See, here is your trunk, locked and strapped, and waiting for the porter's shoulder;" and she showed Hilda a stout, substantial-looking trunk, bearing the initials H.G.

"But, Mamma," Hilda began, wondering greatly, "my dresses are all hanging in my wardrobe."

"Not all of them, dear!" said her mother, smiling. "Hark! Papa is calling you. Make haste and go down, for dinner is ready."

Wondering more and more, Hildegarde got ready hastily, putting on the pretty pale blue cashmere dress which her father



specially liked, with silk stockings to match, and dainty slippers of bronze kid skin. As she clasped the necklace of delicate blue and silver Venetian beads which completed the costume, she glanced into the long glass which stood between the windows and could not help giving a little approving nod to her reflection.

Though not a great beauty, Hildegarde was certainly a remarkably pretty and even distinguished-looking girl; and “being neither blind nor a fool,” she soliloquized, “where is the harm in acknowledging it?” But the next moment the thought came: “What difference will it make, in an old farmhouse, whether I am pretty or not?” And with the “quiet and cold” look darkening over her face, she went slowly downstairs.

Her father met her with a kiss and clasp of the hand even warmer than usual.

“Well, General!” he said, in a voice which insisted upon being cheery, “marching orders, eh? Marching orders! Break up camp!” But the next moment he added, in an altered tone: “My girl, Mamma knows best; remember that! She is right in this move, as she generally is. Cheer up, darling, and let us make the last evening a happy one!”

Hilda tried to smile, for who could be angry with Papa? She made a little effort, and the father and mother made a great one—how great she could not know—and so the evening passed, better than might have been expected.

The evening passed, and the night and the next day came; and it was like waking from a strange dream when Hilda found herself in a railway train, with her father sitting beside her, and her mother’s farewell kiss yet warm on her cheek, speeding over the open country, away from home and all that she held most dear.

Her dressing-bag, with her umbrella neatly strapped to it, was in the rack overhead, the check for her trunk in her pocket. Could it all be true? She tried to listen while her father told her of the happy days he had spent on his grandfather's farm when he was a boy; but the interest was not real, and she found it hard to fix her mind on what he was saying. What did she care about swinging on gates or climbing apple-trees, or riding unruly colts! She was not a boy, nor even a tomboy. When he spoke of the delights of walking in the country through woodland and meadow, her thoughts strayed to Fifth Avenue, with its throng of well-dressed people, the glittering carriages rolling by, the stately houses on either side, through whose shining windows one caught glimpses of the splendors within, and to the Park, with its shady alleys and well-kept lawns. Could there be any walking so delightful as that which these afforded? Surely not! Ah! Madge and Helen were probably just starting for their walk now. Did they know of her banishment? Would they laugh at the thought of Queen Hildegardis vegetating for three months at a wretched—

"Glenfield!" The conductor's voice rang clear and sharp through the car. Hilda started, and seized her father's hand convulsively.

"Papa!" she whispered, "O Papa! Don't leave me here; take me home! I cannot bear it!"

"Come, my child!" said Mr. Graham, speaking low and with an odd catch in his voice. "That is not the way to go into action. Remember, this is your first battle. So, eyes front! Quick step! Forward, march!"

The train had stopped. They were on the platform. Mr. Graham led Hilda up to a stout, motherly-looking woman, who held out her hand with a beaming smile.

"Here is my daughter, Mrs. Hartley!" he said, hastily. "You will take good care of her, I know. My darling, goodbye! God bless you, my Hilda! Courage!" and he was gone. The engine shrieked an unearthly "Goodbye!" and the train rumbled away, leaving Hilda gazing after it through a mist which only her strong will prevented from dissolving in tears.

"Well, my dear," said Dame Hartley's cheery voice, "your papa's gone, and you must not stand here and fret after him. Here is old Nancy shaking her head, and wondering why she does not get home to her dinner. Get into the cart, and I will get the station-master to put your trunk in for us."

Hilda obeyed in silence; and climbing into the neat wagon, took her seat and looked about her while Dame Hartley bustled off in search of the station-master. There was not very much to look at at Glenfield station. The low wooden building with its long platform stood on a bare spot of ground, from which the trees all stood back, as if to mark their disapproval of the railway and all that belonged to it. The sandy soil made little attempt to produce vegetation, but put out little humps of rock occasionally, to show what it could do. Behind, a road led off into the woods, hiding itself behind the low-hanging branches of chestnut and maple, ash and linden trees. That was all. Now that the train was gone, the silence was unbroken save by the impatient movements of the old white mare as she shook the flies off and rattled the jingling harness.

Hilda was too weary to think. She had slept little the night before, and the suddenness of the recent changes confused her mind and made her feel as if she were someone else, and not herself at all. She sat patiently, counting half-unconsciously each

quiver of Nancy's ears. But now Dame Hartley came bustling back with the station-master, and between the two, Hilda's trunk was hoisted into the cart. Then the good woman climbed in over the wheel, settled her ample person on the seat and gathered up the reins, while the station-master stood smoothing the mare's mane as he talked with Dame Hartley.

Hilda uttered a long sigh of weariness and impatience; and Dame Hartley, with a penitent glance at her, bade good-morning to the station-master, gave old Nancy a smart slap with the reins, and drove off down the road.

"My dear child," she said to Hilda as they jogged along, "I ought not to have kept you waiting so long, and you tired with your ride in the cars. But the station-master lives all alone here, and he does enjoy a little chat with an old neighbor more than most folks, so I hope you'll excuse me."

"It is of no consequence, thank you," murmured Hildegarde, with cold civility. She did not like to be called "my dear child," to begin with; and besides, she was very weary and heartsick, and altogether miserable. But she tried to listen, as the good woman continued to talk in a cheery, comfortable tone, telling her how fond she had always been of "Miss Mildred," as she called Mrs. Graham, and how she had the care of her till she was almost a woman grown.

"And to think how you've grown, Hilda dear! You don't remember it, of course, but this isn't the first time you have been at Hartley's Glen. A sweet baby you were, just toddling about on the prettiest little feet I ever saw, when your mamma brought you out here to spend a month with old Nurse Lucy. And your father came out every week, whenever he could get away from his business. What a fine man he is, to be sure! And he and

my husband had rare times, shooting over the meadows, and fishing, and the like.”

They were still in the road, now jolting along over ridges and hills, now ploughing through stretches of soft, sandy soil. Above and on either side, the great trees interlaced their branches, sometimes letting them droop till they brushed against Hilda's cheek, sometimes lifting them to give her a glimpse of cool vistas of dusky green, shade within shade—moss-grown hollows, where the St. John's-wort showed its tarnished gold, and white Indian pipe gleamed like silver along the ground; or stony beds over which, in the time of the spring rains, little brown brooks ran foaming and bubbling down through the woods. The air was filled with the faint cool smell of ferns, and on every side were great masses of them—clumps of splendid ostrich-ferns, waving their green plumes in stately pride; miniature forests of the graceful brake, beneath whose feathery branches the wood-mouse and other tiny forest-creatures roamed secure; and in the very roadway, trampled under old Nancy's feet, delicate lady-fern and sturdy hart's-tongue and a dozen other varieties, all perfect in grace and sylvan beauty. Hilda was conscious of a vague delight, through all her fatigue and distress. How beautiful it was; how cool and green and restful! If she must stay in the country, why could it not be always in the woods, where there was no noise nor dust nor confusion?

Her reverie was broken in upon by Dame Hartley's voice crying cheerily, “And here we are, out of the woods at last! Cheer up, my pretty, and let me show you the first sight of the farm. It's a pleasant, heartsome place, to my thinking.”

The trees opened left and right, stepping back and curtsying,

like true gentlefolks as they are, with delicate leaf-draperies drooping low. The sun shone bright and hot on a bit of hard, glaring yellow road, and touched more quietly the roofs and chimneys of an old yellow farmhouse standing at some distance from the road, with green rolling meadows on every side, and a great clump of trees mounting guard behind it. A low stone wall, with wild-roses nodding over it, ran along the roadside for some way; and midway in it was a trim, yellow-painted gate, which stood invitingly open, showing a neat driveway, shaded on either side by graceful drooping elms. Old Nancy pricked up her ears and quickened her pace into a very respectable trot, as if she already smelled her oats. Dame Hartley shook her own comfortable shoulders and gave a little sigh of relief, for she too was tired and glad to get home. But Hilda tightened her grasp on the handle of her dressing-bag and closed her eyes with a slight shiver of dislike and dread. She would not look at this place. It was the hateful prison where she was to be shut up for three long, weary, dismal months. The sun might shine on it, the trees might wave, and the wild-roses open their slender pink buds; it would be nothing to her. She hated it, and nothing, nothing, nothing could ever make her feel differently. Ah! The fixed and immovable determination of fifteen—does later life bring anything like it?

But now the wagon stopped, and Hilda must open her eyes, whether she would or no. In the porch, under the blossoming clematis, stood a tall, broad-shouldered man, dressed in rough homespun, who held out his great brown hand and said in a gruff, hearty voice, "Here you be, eh? Thought you was never comin'. And this is little miss, is it? Howdy, missy! Glad to see ye! Let me jump you out over the wheel!"

But Hilda declined to be “jumped out” and barely touching the proffered hand, sprang lightly to the ground.

“Now, Marm Lucy,” said Farmer Hartley, “let’s see you give a jump like that. ‘Tain’t so long, seems to me, since you used to be as spry as a grass hopper.”

Dame Hartley laughed and climbed leisurely down from the cart. “Never mind, Jacob!” she said; “I’m spry enough yet to take care of you, if I can’t jump as well as I used.”

“This missy’s trunk?” continued the farmer. “Let me see! What’s missy’s name now? Huldy, ain’t it! Little Huldy! ‘Pears to me that’s what they used to call you when you was here before.”

“My name is Hildegardis Graham!” said Hilda in her most icy manner—what Madge Everton used to call her Empress-of-Russia-in-the-ice-palace-with-the-mercury-sixty-degrees-below-zero manner.

“Huldy Gardies!” repeated Farmer Hartley. “Well, that’s a comical name now! Sounds like Hurdy-gurdys, doesn’t it? Where did Mis’ Graham pick up a name like that, I wonder? But I reckon Huldy’ll do for me.”

“Come, Father,” said Dame Hartley, “the child’s tired now, and I guess she wants to go upstairs. If you’ll take the trunk, we’ll follow you.”

The stalwart farmer swung the heavy trunk up on his shoulder as lightly as if it were a small satchel, and led the way into the house and up the steep, narrow staircase.

Chapter 3 - Part 1

The Prisoner of Despair

s she followed in angry silence, Hilda had a glimpse through a half-open door of a cozy sitting-room; while another door, standing fully open at the other end of the little hall, showed, by a blaze of scarlet tiger-lilies and yellow marigolds, where the garden lay. And now the farmer opened a door and set down the trunk with a heavy thump; and Dame Hartley, taking the girl's hand, led her forward, saying: "Here, my dear, here is your own little room—the same that your dear mamma slept in when she was here! And I hope you'll be happy in it, Hilda dear, and get all the good we wish for you while you're here!" Hilda bowed slightly, feeling unable to speak; and the good woman continued: "You must be hungry as well as tired, traveling since morning. It's near our dinner time. Or shall I bring you up something now—a cup of tea and a cookie, eh? Or would you like solid victuals better?"

"Thank you!" said Hilda. "I am not at all hungry; I could not possibly eat anything. My head aches badly!" she added, nervously forestalling her hostess's protestations. "Perhaps a cup of tea later, thank you! I should like to rest now. And I shall not want any dinner."

"Oh, you'll feel better, dear, when you have rested a bit," said Dame Hartley, smoothing the girl's fair hair with a motherly touch and not seeming to notice her angry shrinking away. "It's the best thing you can do, to lie down and take a good nap; then you'll wake up fresh as a lark and ready to enjoy yourself. Goodbye, dearie! I'll bring up your tea in an hour or so." And with a parting nod and smile, the good woman departed, leaving Hilda, like the heroine of a three-volume novel, "alone with her despair."

Very tragic indeed, the maiden looked as she tossed off her hat and flung herself face downward on the bed, refusing to cast even a glance at the cell which was to be her hateful prison. "For, of course, I shall spend my time here!" she said to herself. "They may send me here, keep me here for years, if they will; but they cannot make me associate with these people." And she recalled with a shudder the gnarled, horny hand which she had touched in jumping from the cart—she had never felt anything like it; the homely speech, and the nasal twang with which it was delivered, the uncouth garb and unkempt hair and beard of the "odious old savage," as she mentally named Farmer Hartley.

After all, however, Hilda was only fifteen; and after a few minutes, curiosity began to wake; and after a short struggle with Despair, it conquered, and she sat up on the bed and looked about her.

It was not a very dreadful cell. A bright, clean, fresh little room, all white and blue. White walls, white bedstead, with oh! such snowy coverings, white dimity curtains at the windows, with old-fashioned ball fringes, a little dimity-covered toilet-table, with a quaint looking-glass framed with fat gilt cherubs, all apparently trying to fold their wings in such a way

as to enable them to get a peep at themselves in the mirror, and not one succeeding. Then there was a low rocking chair, and another chair of the high-backed order, and a tall chest of drawers, all painted white, and a wash-hand-stand with a set of dark-blue crockery on it which made the victim of despair open her eyes wide. Hilda had a touch of china mania and knew a good thing when she saw it; and this deep, eight-sided bowl, this graceful jug with the quaint gilt dragon for a handle, these smaller jugs, boxes, and dishes, all of the same pattern, all with dark-blue dragons, large and small, prancing and sprawling on a pale buff ground—what were these things doing in the paltry bedroom of a common farmhouse? Hilda felt a new touch of indignation at “these people” for presuming to have such things in their possession.

When her keen eyes had taken in everything, down to the neat rag-carpet on the floor, the girl thought of her trunk. She might as well unpack it. Her head could not ache worse, whatever she did; and now that Curiosity was awake, he prompted her to wonder what the trunk contained. None of the dresses she had been wearing, she was sure of that; for they were all hanging safely in her wardrobe at home. What surprise had Mamma been planning? Well, she would soon know. Hastily unlocking the trunk, she lifted out one tray after another and laid them on the bed. In the first were piles of snowy collars and handkerchiefs, all of plain, fine linen, with no lace or embroidery; a broad-brimmed straw hat with a simple wreath of daisies round it; another hat, a small one, of rough gray felt, with no trimming at all, save a narrow scarlet ribbon; a pair of heavy castor gloves; a couple of white aprons, and one of brown holland, with long sleeves. The next tray was filled with

dresses—dresses which made Hilda's eyes open wide again, as she laid them out, one by one, at full length. There was a dark blue gingham with a red stripe, a brown gingham dotted with yellow daisies, a couple of light calicoes, each with a tiny figure or flower on it, a white lawn, and a sailor-suit of rough blue flannel. All these dresses, and among them all not an atom of trimming. No sign of an overskirt, no ruffle or puff, plaiting or ruching, no "Hamburg" or lace—nothing! Plain round waists, neatly stitched at throat and wrists; plain round skirts, each with a deep hem, and not so much as a tuck by way of adornment.

Hildegarde drew a deep breath, and looked at the simple frocks with kindling eyes and flushing cheeks. These were the sort of dresses that her mother's servants wore at home. Why was she condemned to wear them now—she, who delighted in soft laces and dainty embroideries and the clinging draperies which she thought suited her slender, pliant figure so well? Was it a part of this whole scheme; and was the object of the scheme to humiliate her, to take away her self-respect, her proper pride?

Mechanically, but carefully, as was her wont, Hilda hung the despised frocks in the closet, put away the hats, after trying them on and approving of them, in spite of herself ("Of course," she said, "Mamma could not get an ugly hat if she tried!"), and then proceeded to take out and lay in the bureau drawers the dainty under-clothing which filled the lower part of the trunk. Under all was a layer of books, at sight of which Hilda gave a little cry of pleasure. "Ah!" she said, "I shall not be quite alone;" for she saw at a glance that here were some old and dear friends. Lovingly she took them up, one by one. Verily a goodly company, such as might even turn a prison into a palace. But what was this, lying in the corner, with her Bible

and Prayer-book, this white leather case, with—ah! Hilda—with blue forget-me-nots delicately painted on it? Hastily Hilda took it up and pressed the spring. Her mother's face smiled on her! The clear, sweet eyes looked lovingly into hers; the tender mouth, which had never spoken a harsh or unkind word, seemed almost to quiver as if in life. So kind, so loving, so faithful, so patient, always ready to sympathize, to help, to smile with one's joy or to comfort one's grief—her own dear, dear mother! A mist came before the girl's eyes. She gazed at the miniature picture until she could no longer see it; and then, flinging herself down on the pillow again, she burst into a passion of tears, and sobbed and wept as if her heart would break. No longer Queen Hildegardis, no longer the outraged and indignant "prisoner," only Hilda—Hilda who wanted her mother!

Finally, she sobbed herself to sleep—which was the very best thing she could have done. By and by Dame Hartley peeped softly in, and seeing the child lying "all in a heap," as she said to herself, with her pretty hair all tumbled about, brought a shawl and covered her carefully up, and went quietly away.

"Pretty lamb!" said the good woman. "She'll sleep all the afternoon now, like enough, and wake up feeling a good bit better—though I fear it will be a long time before your girlie feels at home with Nurse Lucy, Miss Mildred, dear!"

Chapter 3 - Part 2

Sure enough, Hilda did sleep all the afternoon, and the soft summer twilight was closing round the farmhouse when she woke with a start from a dream of home.

“Mamma!” she called quickly, raising herself from the bed. For one moment she stared in amazement at the strange room, with its unfamiliar furnishing, but recollection came only too quickly. She started up as a knock was heard at the door, and Dame Hartley’s voice said:

“Hilda, dear, supper is ready, and I am sure you must be very hungry. Will you come down with me?”

“Oh, thank you, presently,” said Hildegarde, hastily. “I am not—I haven’t changed my dress yet. Don’t wait for me, please!”

“Dear heart, don’t think of changing your dress!” said Dame Hartley. “You are a country lassie now, you know, and we are plain farm people. Come down just as you are, there’s a dear!”

Hilda obeyed, only waiting to wash her burning face and hot, dry hands in the crystal-cold water which she poured out of the blue dragon pitcher. Her hair was brushed back and tied with a ribbon, the little curls combed and patted over her forehead. In a few minutes she followed her hostess down the narrow staircase, with a tolerably resigned expression on her pretty face. To tell the truth, Hilda felt a great deal better for her long nap; moreover, she was a little curious, and very, very hungry—and oh, how good something did smell!

Mrs. Hartley led the way into the kitchen, as the chief room at Hartley Farm was still called, though the cooking was now done by means of a modern stove in the back kitchen. The great fireplace, with the crane hanging over it and the brick oven by its side was used, as a rule, only to warm the room. At this season the room needed no warming. Ah, it was a pleasant room, the kitchen at Hartley Farm—wide and roomy, with deep-seated windows facing the south and west; with a floor of dark oak, which shone with more than a century of scrubbing. The fireplace, oven, and cupboards occupied one whole side of the room. Along the other ran a high dresser, whose shelves held a goodly array of polished pewter and brass, shining glass, and curious old china and crockery. Overhead were dark, heavy rafters, relieved by the gleam of yellow “crook-neck” squashes, bunches of golden corn, and long festoons of dried apples. In one window stood the good dame’s rocking chair, with its gay patchwork cushion; and her Bible, spectacles, and work basket lay on the window seat beside it. In another was a huge leather armchair, which Hilda rightly supposed to be the farmer’s. There was also a wonderful piece of furniture, half desk, half chest of drawers, with twisted legs and cupboards and pigeon-holes and tiny drawers, and I don’t know what else. The third window Hilda thought was the prettiest of all. It faced the west, and the full glory of sunset was now pouring through the clustering vines that partly shaded it. The sash was open, and a white rose was leaning in and nodding in a friendly way, as if greeting the newcomer. A low chair and a little work table, both of quaint and graceful fashion, stood in the recess; and on the window seat stood some flowering plants in pretty blue and white pots.

"I suppose I am expected to sit there!" said Hilda to herself. "As if I should sit down in a kitchen!" But all the while she knew in her heart of hearts that this was one of the most attractive rooms she had ever seen and that that particular corner was pretty enough and picturesque enough for a queen to sit in. You are not to think that she saw all these things at the first glance; far from it. There was something else in the room that claimed the immediate attention of our heroine, and that was a square oak table, shining like a mirror, and covered with good things—cold chicken, eggs and bacon, golden butter and honey, a great brown loaf of bread on a wonderful carved wooden platter, delicate rolls piled high on a shallow blue dish, and a portly glass jug filled with rich, creamy milk. Here was a pleasant sight for a hungry heroine of fifteen! But alas! At the head of this inviting table sat Farmer Hartley, the "odious savage," in his rough homespun coat, with his hair still very far from smooth (though indeed he had brushed it, and the broad, horny hands were scrupulously clean). With a slight shudder Hilda took the seat that Dame Hartley offered her.

"Well, Huldy," said the farmer, looking up from his eggs and bacon with a cheery smile, "here you be, eh? Rested after your journey, be ye?"

"Yes, thank you!" said Hilda, coldly.

"Have some chick'n!" he continued, putting nearly half a chicken on her plate. "And a little bacon, just to liven it up, hey? That's right! It's my idea that most everythin's the better for a bit of bacon, unless it's soft custard. Haw! Haw!"

Hilda kept her eyes on her plate, determined to pay no attention to the vulgar pleasantries of this unkempt monster. It was hard enough to eat with a steel fork, without being further

tormented. But the farmer seemed determined to drag her into conversation.

"How's your health, Huldý? Seems to me you look kind of peaked."

"I am quite well!" It was Queen Hildegard who spoke now, in icy tones; but her coldness had no effect on her loquacious host.

"I suppose you'll want to rest for a day or two, till you get used to things, like; but then I shall want you to start working. We're short-handed now, and a smart, likely gal can be a sight of help. There's the cows to milk—there's only one that's real ugly, and she only kicks with one hind-leg; so it's easy enough to look out for her."

Hilda looked up in horror and amazement and caught a twinkle in the farmer's eye, which told her that he was quizzing her. The angry blood surged up even to the roots of her hair, but she disdained to reply and continued to crumble her bread in silence.

"Father, what ails you?" said kind Dame Hartley. "Why can't you let the child alone? She's tired yet, and she doesn't understand your joking ways. Don't you mind the farmer, dear, one bit; his heart's in the right place, but he does love to tease."

But the good woman's gentle words were harder to bear, at that moment, than her husband's untimely jesting. Hilda's heart swelled high. She felt that in another moment the tears must come, and murmuring a word of excuse, she hastily pushed back her chair and left the room.

An hour after, Hilda was sitting by the window of her own room, looking listlessly out on the soft summer evening, and listening to the melancholy cry of the whippoorwill, when she heard voices below. The farmer was sitting on the vine-clad

porch just under the window; and now his wife had joined him, after cleaning up the kitchen and giving orders for the next morning to the tidy maidservant.

“Well, Marm Lucy,” said Farmer Hartley’s gruff, hearty voice, “now that you have your fine bird, I should like to know what you’re going to do with her. She’s as pretty as a picture, but a stuck-up piece as ever I see. Don’t favor her mother, nor father either, as I can see.”

“Poor child!” said Dame Hartley, with a sigh. “I fear she will have a hard time of it before she comes to herself. But I promised Miss Mildred that I would try my best, and you said you would help me, Jacob.”

“So I did, and so I will!” replied the farmer. “But tell me again, what was Miss Mildred’s idea? I got the general drift of it, but I can’t seem to put it together exactly. I didn’t suppose the gal was this kind, anyhow.”

“She told me,” Dame Hartley said, “that this child—her only one, Jacob, you know what that means—was getting into ways she didn’t like. Going about with other city misses who cared for nothing but pleasure and who flattered and petted her because of her beauty and her pretty, proud ways (and maybe because of her father’s money too; though Miss Mildred didn’t say that). She was getting to think too much of herself and to care too much for fine dresses and sweetmeats and idle chatter about nothing at all.”

How Hilda’s cheeks burned as she listened and remembered the times in her room, she on the sofa, and Madge in the armchair, with the box of Huyler’s or Maillard’s best caramels always between them! Had they ever talked of anything “worth the while,” as Mamma would say? She remembered Mamma’s

coming in upon them once or twice, with her sweet, grave face. She remembered, too, a certain uneasy feeling she had had for a moment—only for a moment—when the door closed behind her mother. But Madge had laughed and said, “Isn’t your mother perfectly sweet? She doesn’t mind a bit, does she?” And she had answered, “Oh, no!” and had forgotten it in the account of Helen McIvor’s new bonnet.

Dame Hartley continued, “And then Miss Mildred said, ‘I had meant to take her into the country with me this summer and try to show the child what life really means and let her learn to know her brothers and sisters in the different walks of this life and how they live and what they do. I want her to see for herself what a tiny bit of the world, and what a silly, useless, gilded bit, is the little set of fashionable girls whom she has chosen for her friends. But this sudden call to California has disarranged all my plans. I cannot take her with me there, for the child is not well, and country air and quiet are necessary for her bodily health. And so, Nurse Lucy,’ she says, ‘I want you to take my child, and do by her as you did by me!’

“‘Oh! Miss Mildred,’ I said, ‘do you think she can be happy or contented here? I’ll do my best; I’m sure you know that! But if she’s as you say, she is a very different child to what you were, Miss Mildred dear.’

“‘She will not be happy at first,’ says Miss Mildred. ‘But she has a really noble nature, Nurse Lucy, and I am very sure that it will triumph over the follies and faults which are on the outside.’

“And then she kissed me, the dear! And she came up and helped me set the little room to rights and kissed the pillows, sweet lady, and cried over them a bit. Ah me! It’s hard parting from our children, even for a little while, that it is.”

Dame Hartley paused and sighed. Then she said: "And so, here the child is, for good or for ill, and we must do our very best by her, Jacob, you as well as I. What ailed you tonight, to tease her so at supper? I thought shame of you, my man."

"Well, Marm Lucy," said the farmer, "I don't hardly know what ailed me. But I tell you what, it was either laugh or cry for me, and I thought laughin' was better than the other. To see that gal a-settin' there, with her pretty head tossed up, and her fine ways, as if it was an honor to the food to put it in her mouth; and to think of how our own little girl used to sit there—" He stopped abruptly, and rising from the bench, began to pace up and down the garden path. His wife joined him after a moment, and the two walked slowly to and fro together, talking in low tones, while the soft summer darkness gathered closer and closer and the pleasant night sounds woke the cricket and katydid and the distant whippoorwill, filling the air with a cheerful murmur.

Long, long sat Hildegarde at the window, thinking more deeply than she had ever thought in her life before. Different passions held her young mind in control while she sat motionless, gazing into the darkness with wide-open eyes. First anger burned high, flooding her cheek with hot blushes, making her temples throb and her hands clench themselves in a passion of resentment. But to this succeeded a mood of deep sadness, of despair, as she thought; though at fifteen one knows not, happily, the meaning of despair.

Was this all true? Was she no better, no wiser, than the silly girls of her set? She had always felt herself so far above them mentally; they had always so frankly acknowledged her supremacy; she knew she was considered a "very superior girl."

Was it true that her only superiority lay in possessing powers which she never chose to exert? And then came the bitter thought: "What have I ever done to prove myself wiser than they?" Alas for the answer! Hilda hid her face in her hands, and it was shame instead of anger that now sent the crimson flush over her cheeks. Her mother despised her! Her mother—perhaps her father, too! They loved her, of course; the tender love had never failed and would never fail. They were proud of her too, in a way. And yet they despised her; they must despise her! How could they help it? Her mother, whose days were a ceaseless round of work for others, without a thought of herself; her father, active, energetic, business-like—what must her life seem to them? How was it that she had never seen, never dreamed before, that she was an idle, silly, frivolous girl? The revelation came upon her with stunning force. These people too, these coarse country people, despised her and laughed at her! The thought was more than she could bear. She sprang up, feeling as if she were suffocating, and walked up and down the little room with hurried and nervous steps. Then, suddenly, there came into her mind one sentence of her mother's that Dame Hartley had repeated: "Hilda has a really noble nature—" What was the rest? Something about triumphing over the faults and follies which lay outside. Had her mother really said that? Did she believe, trust in, her silly daughter? The girl stood still, with clasped hands and bowed head. The tumult within her seemed to die away, and in its place something was trembling into life, the like of which Hilda Graham had never known, never thought of, before—faint and timid at first, but destined to gain strength and to grow from that one moment—a wish, a hope, and finally a resolve.

Chapter 4

The New Hilda



he morning came laughing into Hilda's room and woke her with such a flash of sunshine and trill of bird-song that she sprang up smiling, whether she wanted or no. Indeed, she felt happier than she could have believed to be possible. The anger, the despair, even the self-humiliation and anguish of repentance, were gone with the night. Morning was here—a new day and a new life. “Here is the new Hildegard!” she cried as she plunged her face into the clear, sparkling water. “Do you see me, blue dragons? Shake paws, you foolish creatures, and don't stand glaring at each other in that way! Here is a new girl come to see you. The old one was just a pert girl—do you hear, dragons?” The dragons heard, but were too polite to say anything; and as for not glaring, why they had glared for fifty years and had no idea of making a change at their time of life.

The gilt cherubs round the little mirror were more amiable and smiled cheerfully at Hilda as she brushed and braided her hair and put on the pretty blue gingham frock. “We have no clothes ourselves,” they seemed to say, “but we appreciate good ones when we see them!” Indeed, the frock fitted to perfection.

"And after all," said the new Hilda as she twirled round in front of the glass, "what is the use of an overskirt?" After this astounding utterance, this young person proceeded to do something still more singular. After a moment's hesitation, she drew out one of the white aprons which she had scornfully laid in the very lowest drawer only twelve hours before, tied it round her slender waist, and then, with an entirely satisfied little nod at the mirror, she tripped lightly downstairs and into the kitchen. Dame Hartley was washing dishes at the farther end of the room, in her neat little cedar dish tub, with her neat little mop; and she nearly dropped the blue and white platter from her hands when she heard Hilda's cheerful "Good morning, Nurse Lucy!" and, turning, saw the girl smiling like a vision of morning.

"My dear," she cried, "I thought you were fast asleep still. I was going up to wake you as soon as I had done my dishes. And did you sleep well your first night at Hartley's Glen?"

"Oh, yes! I slept very sound indeed," said Hilda, lightly. And then, coming close up to Dame Hartley, she said in an altered tone, and with heightened color: "Nurse Lucy, I did not behave well last night, and I want to tell you that I am sorry. I am not like Mamma, but I want to grow a little like her, if I can, and you must help me, please!"

Her voice faltered, and good Nurse Lucy, laying down her mop, took the slender figure in her motherly arms, from which it did not now shrink away.

"My lamb!" she said; "Miss Mildred's own dear child! You look more like your blessed mother this minute than I ever thought you would. Help you? That I will, with all my heart! Though I doubt if you need much help, coming to yourself so soon as this. Well, well!"

“Coming to herself!” It was the same phrase the good dame had used the night before, and it struck Hilda’s mind with renewed force. Yes, she had come to herself—her new self, which was to be so different from the old. How strange it all was! What should she do now, to prove the new Hilda and try her strength? Something must be done at once; the time for folded hands and listless revery was gone by.

“Shall I—may I help you to get breakfast?” she asked aloud, rather timidly.

“Breakfast? Bless you, honey, we had breakfast two hours ago. We farmers are early birds, you know. But you can lay a plate and napkin for yourself, if you like, while I drop a couple of fresh eggs and toast and a bit of bacon for you. Do you like bacon, then?”

Rather disappointed at the failure of her first attempt to be useful, Hilda laid the snowy napkin on the shining table and chose a pretty blue and white plate from the well-stocked shelves of the dresser.

“And now open that cupboard, my lamb,” said her hostess, “and you’ll find the loaf, and a piece of honeycomb, and some raspberries. I’ll bring a pat of butter and some milk from the dairy, where it’s all cool for you.”

“Raspberries!” cried Hilda. “Oh, how delightful! Why, the dew is still on them, Nurse Lucy! And how pretty they look with the cool green leaves round them!”

“Ay!” said the good woman, “Jacob brought them in not ten minutes ago. He thought you would like them fresh from the bushes.”

Hilda’s cheek grew red like the raspberries in bloom as she bent over them to inhale their fragrance. The farmer had picked

these himself for her—had probably left his work to do so; and she had called him an odious old savage, and an unkempt monster, and—oh dear! Decidedly, the old Hilda was a very disagreeable girl. But here were the eggs, each blushing behind its veil of white, and here was the milk, and a little firm nugget in a green leaf, which was too beautiful to be butter, and yet too good to be anything else. And the new Hilda might eat her breakfast with a thankful heart, and did so. The white rose nodded to her from the west window much more cordially than it had done the night before. It even brought out a little new bud to take a peep at the girl who now smiled, instead of scowling across the room. The vines rustled and shook, and two bright black eyes peeped between the leaves. “Tweet!” said the robin, ruffling his scarlet waistcoat a little. “When you have quite finished your worms, you may come out, and I will show you the garden. There are cherries!” And away he flew, while Hilda laughed and clapped her hands, for she had understood every word.

“May I go out into the garden?” she asked, when she had finished her breakfast and taken her first lesson in dish washing, in spite of Dame Hartley’s protest. “And isn’t there something I can do there, please? I want to work; I don’t want to be idle any longer.”

“Well, honey,” replied the dame, “there are currants to pick, if you like such work as that. I am going to make jelly tomorrow; and if you like to begin the picking, I will come and help you when my bread is out of the oven.”

Gladly, Hilda flew up to her room for the broad-leaved hat with the daisy-wreath; and then, taking the wide, shallow basket which Dame Hartley handed her, she fairly danced out of the door, over the bit of green, and into the garden.

Ah! The sweet, heartsome country garden that this was—the very thought of it is a rest and a pleasure. Straight down the middle ran a little gravel path, with a border of fragrant clove-pinks on either side, planted so close together that one saw only the masses of pale pink blossoms resting on their bed of slender silvery leaves. And over the border! Oh how beautiful were the wealth of flowers, the blaze of crimson and purple and gold, the bells that swung, the spires that sprang heavenward, the clusters that nodded and whispered together in the morning breeze! Here were ranks upon ranks of silver lilies, drawn up in military fashion, and marshalled by clumps of splendid tiger-lilies—the drum-majors of the flower-garden. Here were roses of every sort, blushing and paling, glowing in gold and mantling in crimson. And the carnations showed their delicate fringes, and the geraniums blazed, and the heliotrope languished, and the “Puritan pansies” lifted their sweet faces and looked gravely about, as if reproving the other flowers for their frivolity; while shy Mignonette, thinking herself well hidden behind her green leaves, still made her presence known by the exquisite perfume which all her gay sisters would have been glad to borrow.

Over all went the sunbeams, rollicking and playing; and through all went Hildegarde, her heart filled with a new delight, feeling as if she had never lived before. She talked to the flowers. She bent and kissed the damask rose, which was too beautiful to pluck. She put her cheek against a lily’s satin-silver petals and started when an angry bee flew out and buzzed against her nose. But where were the currant-bushes? Ah! There they were—a row of stout green bushes, forming a hedge at the bottom of the garden.

Hilda fell busily to work, filling her basket with the fine, ruddy clusters. "How beautiful they are!" she thought, holding up a bunch so that the sunlight shone through it. "And these pale, pinky golden ones, which show all the delicate veins inside. Really, I must eat this fat bunch."

While fingers and fancy were thus busily employed, Hilda was startled by the sound of a voice, which seemed to come from beyond the currant-bushes, very near her. She stood quite still and listened.

"A-g, ag," said the voice; "g-l-o-m, glom—agglom; e-r er—agglomer; a-t-e, ate—agglomerate." There was a pause, and then it began again: "A-g, ag; g-l-o-m, glom."

Hilda's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused; and laying down her basket, she cautiously parted the leaves and peeped through. She hardly knew what she expected to see. What she did see was a boy about ten years old in a flannel shirt and a pair of ragged breeches, busily weeding a row of carrots; for this was the vegetable garden that lay behind the currant-bushes. On one side of the boy was a huge heap of weeds; on the other lay a tattered book, at which he glanced from time to time, though without leaving his work. "A-n, an," he was now saying; "t-i, ti—anti; c-i-p, cip—anticip; a-t-e, ate—anticipate. 'To expect.' Well! That is a good one. Why can't they just say 'expect,' instead of breaking their jaws with a word like that? Anticip-ate! Well, I'll be!"

At this Hilda could contain herself no longer, but burst into a merry peal of laughter; and as the boy started up with staring eyes and open mouth, she pushed the bushes aside and came towards him. "I am sorry I laughed," she said, not unkindly. "You said that so funnily, I couldn't help it. You did not pronounce the word quite right, either. It is anticipate."



The boy looked half bewildered and half grateful. "Anticipate!" he repeated, slowly. "Thanky, miss! It's a unreasonable sort of word." And he bent over his carrots again.

But Hilda did not return to her currant picking. She was interested in this freckled, tow-headed boy, wrestling with four-syllabled words while he worked.

"Why do you study your lesson out here?" she asked, sitting down on a convenient stump and refreshing herself with another bunch of white currants. "Couldn't you learn it better indoors?"

"Dunno!" replied the boy. "I ain't got no time to stay indoors."

"You might learn it in the evening!" suggested Hilda.

"I can't keep awake evenings," said the boy, simply. "I have to be up at four o'clock to let the cows out, and I get sleepy, come night. And I like it here, too," he added. "I can learn words easier while I'm weeding. It's ten weeds to every word."

"Ten weeds to a word?" repeated Hilda. "I don't understand you."

"Why," said the boy, looking up at her with wide-open blue eyes, "I take a good stiff word (I like 'em stiff, like that an—anticipate feller), and I say it over and over while I pull up ten weeds—big weeds, of course. I don't count easy little chickweed. By the time the ten weeds are pulled up, I know the word. I've learned fifteen just today!" And he glanced proudly at his tattered spelling book as he tugged away at a mammoth root, which stretched its ugly, sprawling length of fleshy arms on every side.

Hilda watched him for some moments, many new thoughts revolving in her head. How many country boys were there who taught themselves in this way? How many, among the

clever girls at Mademoiselle high-fashion school, had this sort of ambition to learn, of pride in learning? Had she, the best scholar in her class, had it? She had always known her lessons, because they were easy for her to learn, because she had a quick eye and ear and a good memory. She could not help learning, Mademoiselle said. But this—this was something different!

“What is your name?” she asked, with a new interest.

“Bubble Chirk,” replied the freckled boy, with one eye on his book, and the other measuring a tall spire of pigweed, toward which he stretched his hand.

“What!” cried Hilda, in amazement.

“Bubble Chirk!” said the boy. “It’s kind of a curious name, isn’t? The full name is Zerubbabel Chirk, but most folks don’t have time to say all that. It trips you up, too, sort of. Bubble’s what they call me; unless it’s Bub.”

The contrast between the boy’s earnest and rather pathetic face, and his absurdly volatile name, was almost too much for Hilda’s gravity. But she checked the laugh that rose to her lips and asked: “Don’t you go to school at all, Bubble? It is a pity that you shouldn’t, when you are so fond of study.”

“I generally go for a spell in the winter,” replied Bubble. “There is no school in summer, you know. Boys have to work round here. Mam hasn’t got nobody but me ‘n Pink, since father died.”

“Who is Pink?” asked Hilda, gently.

“My sister,” replied Bubble. “That isn’t her real name, neither. Mam had her christened Pinkrosia, along of her being so fond of roses, Mam was; but we always call her Pink.”

“Pink Chirk!” repeated Hilda to herself. “What a name! What can a girl be like who is called Pink Chirk?”

But now Bubble seemed to think that it was his turn to ask questions. "I reckon you're the gal that's come to stay at Mr. Hartley's?" he said in an interrogative tone.

Hilda's brow darkened for a moment at the word "gal," which came with innocent frankness from the lips of the ragged boy before her. But the next moment she remembered that it was only the old Hilda who cared about such trifles, so she answered pleasantly enough:

"Yes, I am staying at Mr. Hartley's. I only came yesterday, but I am to stay some time."

"And what might your name be?" inquired Master Chirk.

"Hildegardis Graham." It was gently said, in a very different voice from that which had answered Farmer Hartley in the same words the night before, but it made a startling impression on Bubble Chirk.

"Hildy—" he began; and then, giving it up, he said simply: "Well, I'll be! Do you carry all that round with you all the time?"

Hilda laughed outright at this.

"Oh, no!" she said; "I am called Hilda generally."

"But you can spell your whole name?" asked the boy anxiously.

"Yes, certainly!"

Bubble's eager look subsided into one of mingled awe and admiration. "Reckon you must know a heap," he said, rather wistfully. "Wished I did!"

Hilda looked at him for a moment without speaking. Her old self was whispering to her. "Take care what you do!" it said. "This is a coarse, common, dirty boy. He smells of the stable; his hair is full of hay; his hands are beyond description. What have you in common with such a creature? He has not even the sense to know that he is your inferior."

"I don't care!" said the new Hilda to herself. "I know what Mamma would do if she were here, and I shall do it—or try to do it, at least. Hold your tongue, you supercilious, pert girl!"

"Bubble," she said aloud, "would you like me to teach you a little, while I am here? I think perhaps I could help you with your lessons."

The boy looked up with a sudden flash in his blue eyes, while his face grew crimson with pleasure.

"Would I like it?" he cried eagerly. But the next moment the glow faded, and he looked awkwardly down at his ragged book and still more ragged clothes. "I guess I don't have any time to learn that way," he muttered in confusion.

"Nonsense!" said Hilda, decidedly. "There must be some hour in the day when you can be spared. I shall speak to Farmer Hartley about it. Don't look at your clothes, you silly boy," she continued, with a touch of Queen Hildegardis' quality, yet with a kindly intonation that was new to her. "I am not going to teach your clothes. You are not your clothes!" cried Her Majesty, wondering at herself, and a little flushed with her recent victory over the "pert girl." The boy's face brightened again.

"That's so!" he said joyously. "That's what Pink says. But I didn't suppose you'd think so," he added, glancing bashfully at the delicate, high-bred face, with its flashing eyes and imperial air.

"I do think so!" said Hilda. "So that is settled, and we will have our first lesson tomorrow. What would you—"

"Hilda! Hilda! Where are you, dear?" called Dame Hartley's voice from the other side of the currant-bush-hedge. And catching up her basket and bidding a hasty goodbye to her

new acquaintance and future scholar, Hildegarde darted back through the bushes.

Zerubbabel Chirk looked after her a few moments, with kindling eyes and open mouth of wonder and admiration.

“Wall!” he said finally, after a pause of silent meditation, “I’ll be.” And he fell to weeding again as if his life depended on it.

Chapter 5

The Blue Platter



erry it is in the green forest, Among the leaves green!”

Thus sang Hildegarde as she sat in the west window, busily stringing her currants. She had been thinking a great deal about Bubble Chirk, making plans for his education and wondering what his sister Pink was like.

At this moment the door opened and Farmer Hartley entered, taking off his battered straw hat as he did so, and wiping his forehead with a red bandanna handkerchief. Hilda looked up with a pleasant smile, meaning to thank him for the raspberries which he had gathered for her breakfast; but, to her utter astonishment, the moment his eyes fell upon her, he gave a violent start and turned very pale. Then, muttering something under his breath, he turned hastily and left the room.

“Oh! What is the matter?” cried Hilda, jumping up from her chair. “What have I done, Nurse Lucy? I have made the farmer angry, somehow. Is this his chair? I thought—”

“No, no, honey dear!” said Nurse Lucy soothingly. “Sit you down; sit you down! You have done nothing. I’m right glad of it,” she added, with a tone of sadness in her pleasant voice. “Seeing as ‘tis all in God’s wisdom, Jacob must come to see it so; and ‘tis no

help, but a deal of hindrance, when folks set aside chairs and the like, and see only them that's gone sitting in them." Then, seeing Hilda's look of bewilderment, she added, laying her hand gently on the girl's soft hair, "You see, dear, we had a daughter of our own this time last year. Our only one she was, and just about your age—the light of our eyes, our Faith. She was a good girl, strong and loving and heartsome, and almost as pretty as yourself, Hilda dear; but our Father had need of her, so she was taken from us for a while. It was cruel hard for Jacob—cruel, cruel hard. He can't seem to see, even now, that it was right, or it wouldn't have been so. And so I can tell just what he felt, coming in just now, sudden like, and seeing you sitting in Faith's chair. Like as not, he forgot it all for a minute and thought you were Faith. She had a blue dress that he always liked, and she'd sit here and sing, and the sun coming in on her through her own window there, as she always called it: like a pretty picture she was, our Faith."

"Oh!" cried Hilda, taking the brown, motherly hand in both of hers, "I am so very, very sorry, dear Nurse Lucy! I did not know! I will never sit here again. I thought—"

But she was ashamed to say what she had thought—that this chair and table had been set for her to tempt her to sit down "in a kitchen!" She could hear herself say it as she had said it last night, with a world of scornful emphasis. How long it seemed since last night; how much older she had grown! And yet—and yet somehow she felt a great deal younger.

All this passed through her mind in a moment, but Nurse Lucy was petting her and saying: "Nay, dearie; nay, child! This is just where I want you to sit. 'Twill be a real help to Farmer, once he is used to it. Hark! I hear him coming now. Sit still! To please me, my dear, sit still where you are."

Hilda obeyed, though her heart beat painfully; and she bent in real distress over the currants as Farmer Hartley once more entered the room. She hardly knew what she feared or expected; but her relief was great when he bade her a quiet but cheerful "Good-day!" and crossing the room, he sat down in his great leather armchair.

"Dinner'll be ready in five minutes, Jacob!" said the good dame, cheerily. "I've only to lay the table and dish the mutton."

"Oh! Let me help," cried Hilda, springing up and setting her bowl of currants on the windowsill.

So between the two, the snowy cloths were put over the table, and the blue plates and the shining knives and forks were laid out. Then they all sat down, and the little maid-servant came, too, and took her place at the end of the table; and presently in came a great loutish-looking fellow, about one or two and twenty, with a great shock of sandy hair and little ferret-eyes set too near together, whom Dame Hartley introduced as her nephew. He sat down, too, and ate more than all the rest of them put together. At sight of this man, who gobbled his food noisily, and uttered loud snorts between the mouthfuls, the old Hilda awoke in full force. She could not endure this; Mamma never could have intended it! The Hartleys were different, of course. She was willing to acknowledge that she had been in the wrong about them; but this lout, this oaf, this villainous-looking churl—to expect a lady to sit at the same table with him—it was too much! She would ask if she might not dine in her own room after this, as apparently it was only at dinner that this "creature" made his appearance.

Farmer Hartley had been very silent since he came in, but now he seemed to feel that he must make an effort to be sociable, so he said kindly, though gravely—



"I see ye're looking at that old dish, Huldy. 'Tis a curious old piece, an that's a fact."

Hilda had not been looking at the dish, though her eyes had been unconsciously fixed upon it, and she now bent forward to examine it. "Where did this come from, Farmer Hartley? I am sure it must have a history."

"Wa-al," said the farmer, smiling, "There's always something amusing to me about that platter. My father was a sea-faring man most of his life and only came to the farm late in life, on account of his older brother dying. Well, he'd picked up a sight of queer things in his voyages, Father. He kept some of 'em stowed away in boxes and brought 'em out from time to time, as he happened to think of 'em. Wa-al, we young ones grew up (four of us there was, all boys, and likely boys too, if I do say it), and my brother Simon, who was next to me, he went to college. He was a clever chap, Simon was, and nothing would do for him but he must be a gentleman.

"'Jacob can stick to the farm and the mill; if he likes,' says he, 'and Tom can go to sea, and William can be a minister, but I'm goin' to be a gentleman!' says Simon. He said it in Father's hearing one day, and Father lay back in his chair and laughed; he was always laughing, Father was. And then he went off upstairs, and we heard him rummaging about among his boxes up in the loft-chamber. Presently he came down again, still a-laughin', and he was carrying that platter in his hand. He set it down before Simon, and said, 'Wealthy,' says he (that was my mother), 'Wealthy,' says he, 'let Simon have his victuals off of this platter every day, d'ye hear? There's no other that's good enough for him!' And then he laughed again, till he fairly shook, and Simon looked black as thunder and took his hat

and went out. And so after Simon went to college, every time he come home for vacation and set down to table with his nose kind of turned up, like he was too good to set with his own kith and kin, Father would go and get the old blue platter and set it afore him, and say, 'Here's your dish, Simon,' and then lay back in his cheer and laugh."

"And did Simon become—a—a gentleman?" asked Hilda, taking her own little lesson very meekly, in her desire to know more.

Farmer Hartley's brow clouded instantly, and the smile vanished from his lips. "Poor Simon!" he said, sadly. "He might have been anything he liked, if he'd lived and—been fortunate."

"Simon Hartley is dead, Hilda dear," interposed Dame Hartley, gently. "He died some years ago. Will you have some of your own currants, my dear? Hilda has been helping me a great deal, Father," she added, addressing her husband. "I don't know how I should have got all my currants picked without her help."

"Has she so?" exclaimed the farmer, fixing his keen gray eyes on the girl. "Waal! To think of that! Why, we shall have her milking that cow soon, after all; hey, Huldy?"

Hildegard looked up bravely, with a little smile. "I will try," she said, cheerfully, "if you will risk the milk, Farmer Hartley."

The old farmer returned her smile with one so bright and kind and genial that somehow the ice bent, then cracked, and then broke. The old Hilda shrank into so small a space that there was really very little left of her, and the new Hilda rose from the table feeling that she had gained a new friend.

So it came to pass that about an hour later our heroine was walking beside the farmer on the way to the barnyard, talking merrily and swinging the basket, which she was going to fill

with eggs. "But how shall I find them," she asked, "if the hens hide them away so carefully?"

"Oh, you'll hear 'em scrattlin' round!" replied the farmer.

They crossed the great sunny barnyard and paused at the barn door, while Hilda looked in with delight. A broad floor, big enough for a ballroom, with towering walls of fragrant hay on either side reaching up to the rafters; great doors open at the farther end, showing a snatch of blue, radiant sky, and a lovely road winding away into deep thickets of birch and linden; dusty, golden, cobwebby sunbeams slanting down through the little windows, and touching the tossed hay-piles into gold; and in the middle, hanging by iron chains from the great central beam, a swing, almost big enough for a giant—such was the barn at Hartley Farm—as pleasant a place, Hilda thought, as she had ever seen.

"Waal, Huldy, I'll leave you here," said the farmer. "You can find your way home, I reckon."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Hilda. "But stop one moment, please, Farmer Hartley. I want to know—will you please—may I teach Bubble Chirk a little?"

The farmer gave a low whistle of surprise, but Hilda went on eagerly: "I found him studying, this morning, while he was weeding the garden—oh!—studying so hard, and yet not neglecting his work for a minute. He seems a very bright boy, and it is a pity he should not have a good education. Could you spare him, do you think, for an hour every day?" She stopped, while the farmer looked at her with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"You teach Bubble Chirk!" he said. "Why, what would your fine friends say to that, Miss Huldy? Bubble ain't nothin' but a common farm-boy, if he is bright; and I ain't denyin' that he is."

"I don't know what they would say," said Hildegarde, blushing hotly. "And I don't care, either! I know what Mamma would do in my place; and so do you, Farmer Hartley!" she added, with a little touch of indignation.

"Waal, I reckon I do!" said Farmer Hartley. "And I know who looks like her mother, this minute, though I never thought she would. Yes!" he said, more seriously. "You shall teach Bubble Chirk, my gal; and it's my belief it will bring you a blessing as well as him. You are your mother's daughter, after all. Shall I give you a swing now, before I go; or are you too big to swing?"

"I—don't—know!" said Hildegarde, eying the swing wistfully. "Am I too big, I wonder?"

"Your ma wasn't, when she was here three weeks ago!" said the farmer. "She just set here and took a good solid swing, for the sake of old times, she said."

"Then I will take one for the sake of new times!" cried Hilda, running to the swing and seating herself on its broad, roomy seat. "For the sake of this new time, which I know is going to be a happy one, give me three good pushes, please, Farmer Hartley, and then I can take care of myself."

One! Two! Three! Up goes Queen Hildegarde, up and up, among the dusty, cobwebby sunbeams, which settle like a crown upon her fair head. Down with a rush, through the sweet, hay-scented air; then up again, startling the swallows from under the eaves, and making the conservative old hens frantic with anxiety. Up and down, in broad, free sweeps, growing slower now, as the farmer left her and went to his work. How perfect it was! Did the world hold anything else so delightful as swinging in a barn? She began to sing, for pure joy, a little song that her mother had made for her when she was a little child,

and used to swing in the garden at home. And Farmer Hartley, with his hand on the brown heifer's back, paused with a smile and a sigh as he heard the girl's sweet fresh voice ring out gladly from the old barn as she sang.

Chapter 6

Hartley's Glen



How many children, among all the children who may read this little book, have seen with their own eyes Hartley's Glen? Not one, perhaps, save Brynhild and the Rosicrucian, for whom the book is written. But the others must try to see it with my eyes, for it is a fair place and as sweet as any on earth. Behind the house, and just under the brow of the little hill that shelters it, a narrow path dips down to the right, and goes along for a bit, with a dimpled clover-meadow on the one hand, and a stone wall, all warm with golden and red-brown lichens, on the other. Follow this, and you come to a little gateway, beyond which is a thick plantation of evergreen trees, with one grim, old red cedar keeping watch over them. If he regards you favorably, you may pass on, down the narrow path that winds among the evergreens, whose feathery fingertips brush your cheek and try to hold you back, as if they willed not that you should go farther, to see the wonders that they can never behold.

But you leave them behind and come out into the sunshine, in a little green glade which might be the ballroom of a queen. On your right, gleaming through clumps of alder and black

birch, is a pond—the home of cardinal flowers and gleaming jewel-weed. A little farther on is a thicket of birch and maple, from which comes a musical sound of falling water. Follow this sound, keeping to the path, which winds away to the left. Stop! Now you may step aside for a moment, and part the heavy hanging branches, and look, where the water falls over a high black wall, into a pool, shut in by fantastic rocks, and shaded from all sunshine by a dense fringe of trees. This is the dam by the mill, and the pond above is no natural one, but the enforced repose and outspreading of a merry brown brook, which now shows its true nature, and escaping from the gloomy pool, runs scolding and foaming down through a wilderness of rocks and trees. You cannot follow it there—though I have often done so in my barefoot days—so come back to the path again. There are pines overhead now, and the ground is slippery with the fallen needles, and the air is sweet—ah! how sweet!—with their warm fragrance. See! Here is the old mill itself, now disused and falling to decay. Here the path becomes a little precipice, and you must scramble as best you can down two or three rough steps and round the corner of the ruined mill. This is a millstone, this great round thing like a granite cheese, half buried in the ground; and here is another, which makes a comfortable seat, if you are tired.

But there is a fairer resting place beyond. Round this one more corner, now, and down—carefully, carefully! Go down this long stairway, formed of rough slabs of stone laid one below the other. Shut your eyes now for a moment and let me lead you forward by the hand. And now—now open the eyes wide, wide, and look about you. In front, and under the windows of the old mill, the water comes foaming and rushing down over a rocky

fall some sixty feet high and leaps merrily into a second pool. No somber, black gulf this, like the one above, but a lovely open circle, half in broad sunshine, half dappled with the shadows of the boughs and ferns that bend lovingly over it. So the little brook is no longer angry, but mingles lovingly with the deep water of the pool, and then runs laughing and singing along the glen on its way down to the sea. On one side of this glen, the bank rises abruptly some eighty feet, its sides clothed with sturdy birches which cling as best they may to the rocky steep. On the other stretches the little valley, a narrow strip of land, but with turf as fine as the Queen's lawn and trees that would proudly grace Her Majesty's park—tall Norway firs, raising their stately forms and pointing their long dark fingers sternly at the intruders on their solitude; graceful birches; and here and there a whispering larch or a nodding pine. The other wall of the valley, or glen, is less precipitous, and its sides are densely wooded, and fringed with barberry bushes and climbing eglantine.

Between these two banks, and over this green velvet carpet, and among these dark fir-trees—ah! How the sun shines here. Nowhere else in the whole land does he shine so sweetly, for he knows that his time there is short, and that the high banks will shut him out from that green, pleasant place long before he must say goodnight to the more commonplace fields and hillsides. So here his beams rest right lovingly, making royal show of gold on the smooth grass, and of diamonds on the running water, and of opals and topazes and beryls where the wave comes curling over the little fall.

And now, amid all this pomp and play of sun and of summer, what is this dash of blue that makes a strange, though not a

discordant, note in our harmony of gold and green? And what is that round, whitish object which is bobbing up and down with such singular energy? Why, the blue is Hildegarde's dress, if you must know; and the whitish object is the head of Zerubbabel Chirk, scholar and devotee; and the energy with which said head is bobbing is the energy of determination and of study. Hilda and Bubble have made themselves extremely comfortable under the great ash tree which stands in the center of the glen. The teacher has curled herself up against the roots of the tree and has a book in her hands; but her eyes are wandering dreamily over the lovely scene before her, and she looks as if she were really too comfortable to move even a finger. The scholar lies at her feet, face downwards, his chin propped on his hands, his head bobbing up and down. The silence is only broken by the noise of the waterfall and the persistent chirping of some very cheerful little bird.

Presently, the boy raised his head and cried joyfully, "I've fetched him, Miss Hildy! I know it, now, just like pie!" Whereupon he stood up, and assuming a military attitude, recited his geography lesson, and came off with flying colors.

"That was a very good recitation," said Hilda, approvingly, as she laid the book down. "You shall have another ballad today as a reward. But, Bubble," she added, rather seriously, "I do wish you would not use so much slang. It is so senseless! Now what did you mean by saying 'just like pie,' in speaking of your lesson just now?"

"Oh! Come now, Miss Hildy!" said Bubble, bashfully. "You can't tell me that you don't know what pie is."

"Of course I know what pie is, you silly boy!" said Hilda, laughing. "But what has pie to do with your geography lesson?"

"That's so!" murmured the boy, apologetically. "That's a fact! I won't say 'like pie' no more. I swear. I'll say 'like blazes,' instead."

"You needn't say 'like' anything!" cried Hilda, laughing again. "Just say, I know my lesson 'well' or 'thoroughly.' There are plenty of real words, Bubble, that have as much meaning as the slang ones, and often a great deal more."

"That's so," said Bubble, with an air of deep conviction. "I'll try not to talk no more slang, Miss Hildy. I will, I swear!"

"But, Bubble, you must not say 'I swear' either; that is abominable slang."

Bubble looked very blank. "Why, what shall I say?" he asked, simply.

"Let me think," said Hilda. "Perhaps I can think of something that will sound better."

"I might say, 'Gee Whittekers!'" suggested Bubble, brightening up a little. "I know some fellers who say that."

"I don't think that would do," replied Hilda, decidedly. "What does it mean?"

"Don't mean nothing," said the boy; "but it sounds kind of handsome, don't it?"

Hilda shook her head with a smile. She did not think "Gee Whittekers" was a "handsome" expression.

"Bubble," she said after a few moments' reflection, during which her scholar watched her anxiously, "I have an idea. If you must say 'something' beside what you actually have to say, let it be something that will remind you of your lessons; then it may help you to remember them. Instead of Gee—what is it?—Gee Whittekers, say Geography, or Spelling, or Arithmetic; and instead of 'I swear,' say 'I study!' What do you think of this plan?"

Bubble nodded his head enthusiastically. "I like it. Ge-ography! Why, that sounds just like pie! I—I don't mean that, Miss Hildy. I didn't mean to say it! It kind of slipped out, you know." Bubble paused, and hung his head in much confusion.

"Never mind!" said Hilda, kindly. "Of course you cannot make the change all at once, Bubble. But little by little, if you really think about it, you will bring it about. Next week," she added, "I think we must begin upon grammar. You are doing very well indeed in spelling and geography, and pretty well in arithmetic, but your grammar, Bubble, is simply frightful."

"Be it?" said Bubble, resignedly. "I want to know!"

"And now," said the young instructress, rising, and shaking out her crumpled frock, "that is enough for today, Bubble. We must be going home soon; but first, I want to take a peep at the lower part of the old mill that you told me about yesterday. You have been in there, you say? And how did you get in?"

"I'll show ye!" cried Bubble, springing up with alacrity, and leading the way towards the mill. "I'll show you the very place, Miss Hildy. It isn't easy to get in, and isn't a place for a lady, nohow; but I can get in, just like—like arithmetic!"

"Bravo, Bubble!" said Hilda, laughing merrily. "That is very well for a beginning. How long is it since the mill was used?" she asked, looking up at the frowning walls of rough, dark stone, covered with moss and lichens.

"Farmer Hartley's grandfather was the last miller," replied Bubble Chirk. "My father used to say he could just remember him, standing at the mill door, all white with flour, and rubbin' his hands and laughin', just the way Farmer does. He was a good miller, Father said, and made the mill pay well. But his eldest

son, that came after him, was no great shakes, and he let the mill go to wreck and ruin, and just stayed on the farm. And then he died, and Captain Hartley came (that's the farmer's father, you know) and didn't care about the mill either, and so there it stayed.

"This way, Miss Hildy!" added the boy, breaking off suddenly and plunging into the tangled thicket of shrubs and brambles that hid the base of the mill. "There! You see that hole? That's where I get in. Wait till I clear away the briars a bit! There! Now you can look in."

The "hole" was a square opening a couple of feet from the ground, and large enough for a person of moderate size to creep through. Hildegarde stooped down and looked in. At first she saw nothing but utter blackness; but presently her eyes became accustomed to the place, and the feeble light that struggled in past her through the opening revealed strange objects which rose here and there from the vast pit of darkness—fragments of rusty iron, bent and twisted into unearthly shapes; broken beams, their jagged ends sticking out like stiffly pointing fingers; cranks, and bits of hanging chain; and on the side next to the water, a huge wheel, rising apparently out of the bowels of the earth, since the lower part of it was invisible. A cold, damp air seemed to rise from the earth. Hilda shivered and drew back, looking rather pale. "What a dreadful place!" she cried. "It looks like a dungeon. I think you were very brave to go in there, Bubble. I am sure I should not dare to go; it looks so frightful."

"It isn't bad, after the first time."

"Well," said Hilda, "we must make haste, for the farmer will be wanting you, and I have a dozen things to do before tea."

"Yes, miss," said Bubble, but without his usual alacrity.

Hilda saw a look of disappointment in his honest blue eyes, and asked what was the matter. "I haven't had my ballad!" said Zerubbabel, sadly.

"Why, you poor lad, so you haven't!" said Hildegarde. "But you shall have it; I will tell it to you as we walk back to the farm. Which one will you have—or shall I tell you a new one?"

The blue eyes sparkled with the delight of anticipation. "Oh, please!" he cried. "Tell me the one you told me yesterday."

Hilda agreed, and Zerubbabel Chirk fairly danced up and down in his excitement. "Oh! But begin again at the beginning, please, Miss Hildy," he cried.

So Hilda, nothing loth, began at the beginning; and as they walked homeward, recited the whole of the noble old ballad.

Chapter 7

Pink Chirk

One lovely morning, Hildegarde stood at the back door, feeding the fowls. She wore her brown gingham frock with the yellow daisies on it and the daisy-wreathed hat, and in her hands she held a great yellow bowl full of yellow corn. So bright a picture she made that Farmer Hartley, driving the oxen in the field, stopped for pure pleasure to look at her.

Around her the ducks and hens were fighting and squabbling, quacking, clucking, and gobbling, and she flung the corn in golden showers on their heads and backs, making them nearly frantic with greedy anxiety.

“Well, Huldy,” said the farmer, leaning against Bright’s massive side, “you look pretty slick in that gown, I must say.”



"It is pretty, I think, and so comfortable!" replied Hilda, laughing merrily. "And where are you going this morning with the oxen?"

"Down to the ten-acre lot," replied the farmer. "The men are makin' hay there today. Jump into the rigging and come along," he added. "Ye can have a little ride and see the hay-makin'. Pretty sight it is, to my thinking."

"May I?" cried Hilda, eagerly. "I am sure these fowls have had enough. Go away now, you greedy creatures! There, you shall have all there is!" And she emptied the bowl over the astonished dignitaries of the barnyard, set it down on the porch, and jumped gayly into the "rigging," as the great hay cart was called.

"Haw, Bright! Hoish, Star!" said the farmer, touching one and then the other of the great black oxen lightly with his goad. The huge beasts swayed from side to side, and finally succeeded in getting themselves and the cart in motion, while the farmer walked leisurely beside them, tapping and poking them occasionally, and talking to them in that mystic language which only oxen and their drivers understand. Down the sweet country lane they went, with the willows hanging over them, and the daisies and buttercups and meadow-sweet running riot all over the banks. Hilda stood up in the cart and pulled off twigs from the willows as she passed under them, and then made garlands, which the farmer obediently put over the oxen's necks. She hummed little snatches of song and chatted gayly with her kind old host; for the world was very fair, and her heart was full of summer and sunshine.

"And have you always lived here, Farmer Hartley?" she asked. "All your life, I mean?"

"No, not all my life," replied the farmer, "though pretty

nigh it. I was ten year old when my uncle died, and father left sea-farin', and came home to the farm to live. Before that we'd lived in different places, moving round, like. We were at sea a good deal, sailing with Father when he went on pleasant voyages, to the West Indies, or such. But since then I haven't been away much. I don't seem to find any pleasanter place than the old farm, somehow."

"I don't believe there is any pleasanter place in the world!" said Hilda, warmly. "I am sure I have never been so happy anywhere as I have here."

Farmer Hartley looked up with a twinkle in his eye. "Ye've changed your views some, Huldy, hain't ye, since the first day you came here? I didn't never think, then, that I'd be givin' you rides in the hay riggin, such a fine young lady as you were."

Hilda gave him an imploring glance, while the blood mounted to her temples. "Please, Farmer Hartley," she said in a low voice, "please try to forget that first day. It isn't my views that have changed," she added, "it is I myself. I don't—I really don't think I am the same girl who came here a month ago."

"No, my gal," said the farmer, heartily, "I don't think you are." He walked along in silence for a few minutes and then said, "It's curious how folks can sometimes change themselves, one way or the other. It isn't so with critters—at least as far as I have observed. The way they're born—that way they'll stay. Now look at them oxen! When they was young steers, hardly more'n calves, I began to train those critters, and from the very first go-off they took their cue and stuck to it. Star, there, would lay out and shake his head, and pull for all he was worth, as if there was nothin' in the world to do but pull. And Bright, he'd wait till Star was drawing good and solid, and then he'd as much as say,

‘Oh! You can pull all that, can you? Well, stick to it, my boy, and I’ll manage to trifle along with the rest of the load.’ Wo-hoish, Star! Haw, Bright! Get up, you old humbug! You’re six years old now, and you haven’t changed a mite in four years, though I’ve drove you stiddy, and tried to spare the other every time.”

The green lane broke off suddenly, and such a blaze of sunlight flashed upon them that Hilda involuntarily raised her hand to shield her eyes. The great meadow lay open before them, an undulating plain of gold. The haycocks looked dull and gray-green upon it; but where the men were tossing the hay with their long wooden rakes, it flashed pale-golden in the sunlight, and filled the air with flying gleams. Also, the air was filled with the sweetness of the hay, and every breath was a delight. Hilda stood speechless with pleasure, and the old farmer watched her glowing face with kindly gratification.

“Pretty sightly, isn’t it?” he said. And then, in a graver tone, and removing his battered straw hat. “I don’t ever seem to see the glory of the Lord any plainer than in a hay field on a day like this. Yes, sir! Amen!” Farmer Hartley put on his hat and proceeded straightway to business. “Now, Huld’y,” he said, “Here you be! I’m going to load up this riggin’, and you can stay round here a spell, if you like, and run home when you like. You can find the way, I reckon?”

“Oh, yes!” said Hilda. “Yes, indeed! But I shall stay here for a while and watch you. And may I toss the hay, too, a little?”

But her courage failed when she found that, to do this, she must mingle with the crowd of strange haymakers, and among them she saw the clumsy form and shock head of Caliban, as she had secretly named the clownish and surly nephew of her good host. This fellow was the one bitter drop in Hilda’s cup.

Everything else she had learned to like, in the month which had passed since she came to Hartley's Glen. The farmer and his wife she loved as they deserved to be loved. The little maidservant was her adoring friend, and secretly sewed her boot buttons on and mended her stockings, as some small return for the lessons in crochet and fancy knitting that she had received from the skillful white fingers which were a perpetual marvel to her. But Simon Hartley remained what she had at first thought him—a sullen, boorish churl. He was a malevolent churl, too, Hildegard thought; indeed she was sure of it. She had several times seen his eyes fixed on his uncle with a look of positive hatred; and though Farmer Hartley was persistently kind and patient with him, trying often to draw him into conversation and make him join in the pleasant evening talks, which they all enjoyed, his efforts were unsuccessful. The fellow came in, gobbled his food, and then went off, if his work was over, to hide himself in his own room. Hilda was quite sure that Nurse Lucy liked this oaf no better than she herself did, though the good woman never spoke impatiently or unkindly to him—and indeed it would be difficult for any one to like him, she thought, except possibly his own mother.

Our Queen Hilda took her seat on a right royal throne of fragrant hay and gave herself up to the full delight of the summer morning, and of the “Field of the Cloth of Gold,” as she had instantly named the shining yellow plain, which more prosaic souls knew as “the ten-acre lot.” The hay rustled pleasantly as she nestled down in it, and made a little penthouse over her head, to keep off the keen, hot sun arrows. There was a great oak tree, too, which partly shaded this favored haycock, and on one of its branches a squirrel came running out and

then sat up and looked at Hildegarde with bright, inquisitive eyes. A maiden, all brown and gold, on a golden haycock! What strange thing was this? Had she come for acorns? Did she know about the four young ones in the snug little house in the hollow just above the first branch! Perhaps—dreadful thought!—she had heard of the marvelous beauty of the four young ones, and had come to steal them. Whisk! Madam Squirrel was off up the branch like a streak of brown lightning with its tail up.

Hilda laughed at the squirrel's alarm and then turned her attention to a large green grasshopper who seemed to demand it. He had alighted on her knee and now proceeded to exhibit his different points before her admiring gaze with singular gravity and deliberation. First, he slowly opened his wings, to show the delicate silvery gauze of the under-wings, then just as slowly closed them, demonstrating the perfect fit of his whole wing-costume and the harmony of its colors. He next extended one leg, calling her attention to its remarkable length and muscular proportions. Then, lest she should think he had but one, he extended the other, and then gave a vigorous hop with both of them, to show her that he did not really need wings, but could get on perfectly well without them. Finally, he rubbed himself all over with his long antennæ, and then, pointing them full at her, and gazing at her with calm and dispassionate eyes, he said plainly enough: "And now, what have you to show me?"

Hildegarde was wondering how she could best dispel the scorn with which this majestic insect evidently regarded her, when suddenly something new appeared on her gown—something black, many-legged, hairy, most hideous; something which ran swiftly but stealthily, with a motion that sent a thrill of horror through her veins. She started up with a little shriek,

shaking off the unlucky spider as if it had been the Black Death in concrete. Then she looked round with flaming cheeks, to see if her scream had been heard by the hay makers. No, they were far away, and too busy to take heed of her. But the charm was broken. Queen Hildegard had plenty of courage of a certain sort, but she could not face a spider.

What should she do now? The charm of the morning had made her idle and drowsy, and she did not feel like going home to help Nurse Lucy in making the butter, though she often did so with right good will. She looked dreamily around, her eyes wandering here and there over the great meadow and the neat stone walls which bounded it. Presently, she spied the chimneys and part of the red roof of a little cottage which peeped from a thick clump of trees just beyond the wall. Who lived in that cottage? Hilda wondered. Why should she not go and see? She was very thirsty, and there she might get a glass of water. Oh! Perhaps it was Bubble's cottage where he and his mother and his sister, Pink, lived. Now that she thought of it, Bubble had told her that he lived "over beyond the ten-acre lot." Of course this must be the place. Slowly, she walked across the meadow and climbed the wall, wondering a good deal about the people whom she was going to see. She had often meant to ask Bubble more about his sister with the queer name; but the lesson hour was so short, and there were always so many questions for Bubble to ask and for her to answer besides the regular lesson, that she always forgot it till too late. Pink Chirk! What could a girl be like with such a name as that? Hilda fancied her a stout, buxom maiden, with very red cheeks and very black eyes—yes, certainly, the eyes must be black! Her hair—well, one could not be so sure about her hair, but there was no doubt about her



wearing a pink dress and a blue checked apron. And she must be smiling, bustling, and energetic. Yes! Hilda had the picture of her complete in her mind. She wondered that this active, stirring girl never came up to the farm, but of course she must have a great deal of work to do at home.

By this time Hildegarde had reached the cottage, and after a moment's hesitation. She knocked softly at the green-painted door. No one came to open the door, but presently she heard a clear, pleasant voice from within saying, "Open the door and come in, please!" Following this injunction, she entered the cottage and found herself directly in the sitting room and face to face with its occupant. This was a girl of her own age, or perhaps a year older, who sat in a wheeled chair by the window. She was very fair, with almost flaxen hair, and frank, pleasant blue eyes. She was very pale, very thin. The hands that lay on her lap were almost transparent, but—she wore a pink calico dress and a blue checked apron. Who could this be? And whoever it was, why did she sit still when a visitor and a stranger came in?

The pale girl made no attempt to rise, but she met Hilda's look of surprise and inquiry with a smile that broke like sunshine over her face, making it, for the moment, positively beautiful. "How do you do?" she said, holding out her thin hand. "I am sure you must be Miss Hilda Graham, and I am Bubble's sister, Pink.

"Please sit down," she added. "I am so very glad to see you. I have wanted again and again to thank you for all your kindness to my Bubble, but I didn't know when I should have a chance. Did Bubble show you the way?"

Hildegarde was so astonished, so troubled, so dismayed that she hardly knew what she was saying or doing. She took the

slender fingers in her own for an instant and then sat down, saying hastily: "Oh, no! I—I found my way alone. I was not sure of its being your cottage, though. I thought it must be from what Bubble told me." She paused; and then, unable to keep back longer the words which sprang to her lips, she said: "I fear you have been ill, you are so pale. I hope it has not been serious. Bubble did not tell me—"

Pink Chirk looked up with her bright, sweet smile. "Oh, no! I have not been ill," she said. "I am always like this. I cannot walk, you know, but I am very well, indeed."

"You cannot walk?" stammered Hilda.

The girl saw her look of horror, and a faint color stole into her wan cheek. "Did not Bubble tell you?" she asked, gently. Then as Hilda shook her head, she said, "It is such a matter of course to him," she said. "He never thinks about it, I suppose, dear little fellow. I was run over when I was three years old, and I have never been able to walk since."

Hildegarde could not speak. The thought of anything so dreadful, so overwhelming as this, coming so suddenly, too, upon her, seemed to take away her usually ready speech; and she was dumb, gazing at the cheerful face before her with wide eyes of pity and wonderment. But Pink Chirk did not like to be pitied, as a rule, and she almost laughed at her visitor's horror-stricken face.

"You mustn't look so!" she cried. "It's very kind of you to be sorry, but it isn't as if I were really ill, you know. I can almost stand on one foot—that is, I can bear enough weight on it to get from my bed to my chair without help. That is a great thing! And then, when I am once in my chair, why I can go almost anywhere. Farmer Hartley gave me this chair," she added,

looking down at it, and patting the arm tenderly, as if it were a living friend. "Isn't it a beauty?"

It was a pretty chair, made of cherry wood, with cushions of gay-flowered chintz; and Hilda, finding her voice again, praised it warmly. "This is its summer dress," said Pink, her eyes sparkling with pleasure. "Underneath, the cushions are covered with soft crimson cloth, oh, so pretty, and so warm-looking! I am always glad when it's time to take the chintz covers off. And yet I am always glad to put them on again," she added, "for the chintz is pretty too, I think, and besides, I know then that summer is really come."

"You like summer best?" asked Hilda.

"Oh, yes!" she replied. "In winter, of course, I can't go out; and sometimes it seems a little long, when Bubble is away all day—not very, you know, but just a little. But in summer, oh, then I am so happy! I can go all round the place by myself, and sit out in the garden, and feed the chickens, and take care of the flowers. And then on Sunday, Bubble always gives me a good ride along the road. My chair moves very easily—only see!" She gave a little push and propelled herself halfway across the little room.

At this moment the inner door opened, and Mrs. Chirk appeared—a slender, anxious-looking woman, with hair prematurely gray. She greeted Hilda with nervous cordiality and thanked her earnestly for her kindness to Zerubbabel. "He ain't the same boy, Miss Graham," she said, "since you began givin' him lessons. He used to fret and worry 'cause there was no school, and he couldn't ha' gone to it if there was. Pinkrosia taught him what she could; but we don't have many books, you see. But now! Why that boy comes into the house singin' and spoutin' poetry at the top of his lungs—juse as happy as a

kitten with a spool. What was that he was shoutin' this mornin', Pinkrosia, when he scared the old black hen nigh to death?"

"Charge for the golden lilies!" murmured Pink, with a smile.

"Yes, that was it!" said Mrs. Chirk. "His father was a real smart man. There was no better hayin' hand in the county than Loammi Chirk. And I hope Zerubbabel will do as well, for he has a good friend in Farmer Hartley. No boy could have a better."

"And my poor girl here," Mrs. Chirk continued after a pause, "she sets in her chair during hay times and other times. You've heard of her misfortune, Miss Graham?"

Pink interposed quickly with a little laugh, though her brows contracted slightly, as if with pain. "Oh, yes, Mother dear," she said. "Miss Graham has heard all about me and knows what a very important person I am. But where is the yarn that I was to wind for you? I thought you wanted to begin weaving this afternoon."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hildegarde. "Never mind the yarn just now, Pink. I want to give you a little ride before I go back to the farm. May she go, Mrs. Chirk? It is such a beautiful day. I am sure the air will do her good. Would you like it, Pink?"

Pink looked up with a flush of pleasure on her pale cheek. "Oh," she said, "would I like it! But it's too much for you to do, Miss Graham."

"And with that beautiful dress on, too!" cried Mrs. Chirk. "You'd get it dusty on the wheel, I'm afraid. I don't think—"

"Oh yes, you do!" cried Hilda, gaily, pushing the chair towards the door. "Bring her hat, please, Mrs. Chirk. I always have my own way!" she added, with a touch of the old imperiousness. "I have quite set my heart on this."

Mrs. Chirk meekly brought a straw sunbonnet, and Hilda tied its strings under Pink's chin, every fiber within her mutely protesting against its extreme ugliness. "She shall not wear that again," said she to herself, "if I can help it." But the sweet pale face looked out so joyously from the dingy yellow tunnel that the stern young autocrat relented. "After all, what does it matter?" she thought. "She would look like an angel, even with a real coal-scuttle on her head." And then she laughed at the thought of a black japanned scuttle crowning those fair locks; and Pink laughed because Hilda laughed. And so they both went laughing out into the sunshine.

Chapter 8

The Letter



urse Lucy,” said Hildegard that evening, as they sat in the porch after tea, “why have you never told me about Pink Chirk—about her being a cripple, I mean? I had no idea of it till I went to see her today. How terrible it is!”

“I wonder that I haven’t told you, dear!” replied Nurse Lucy, placidly. “I suppose I am so used to Pink as she is, I forget that she ever was like other people. She is a dear, good child—his ‘sermon,’ Jacob calls her. He says that whenever he feels impatient or put out, he likes to go down and look at Pink and hear her talk. ‘It takes the impatience right out of me!’ he says!”

“But how did it happen?” asked Hilda. “She says she was only three years when she . . . Oh, think of it, Nurse Lucy! It is too dreadful. Tell me how it happened.”

“Don’t ask me, my dear!” said Dame Hartley, sadly. “Why should you hear anything so painful? It would only haunt your mind as it haunted mine for years after. The worst of it was, there was no need of it. Her mother was a young, flighty, careless girl, and she didn’t look after her baby as she should have done. That is all you need know, Hilda, my dear! Poor Susan Chirk! It took the flightiness out of her and made her the

anxious, melancholy soul she has been ever since. Then Bubble was born, and soon after her husband died. Since then she has had a hard time to fend for herself. But Pink has never been any trouble to her, only a help and a comfort; and her neighbors have done what they could from time to time.”

Dame Hartley might have said that she and her husband had kept this desolate widow and her children from starvation through many a long winter and had given her the means of earning her daily bread in summer, had clothed the children, and provided comforts for the crippled girl. But this was not Nurse Lucy’s way. The neighbors had done what they could, she said; and now Bubble was earning good wages for a boy, and was sure to get on well, being bright and industrious; and Mrs. Chirk took in weaving to do for the neighbors, and went out sometimes to work by the day; and so they were really getting on very well—better than one could have hoped.

Hildegarde laid her head against the good Dame’s shoulder and fell into a brown study. Nurse Lucy seemed also in a thoughtful mood; and so the two sat quietly in the soft twilight till the red glow faded in the west and left in its stead a single star, gleaming like a living jewel in the purple sky. All the birds were asleep save the untiring whippoorwill, who presented his plea for the castigation of the unhappy William with ceaseless energy. A little night breeze came up, and said pleasant, soft things to the leaves, which rustled gently in reply, and the crickets gave their usual evening concert, beginning with a movement in G sharp, *allegro con moto*. Other sound there was none, until by and by the noise of wheels was heard and the click of old Nancy’s hoofs; and out of the gathering darkness Farmer Hartley appeared, just returned from the

village, where he had gone to make arrangements about selling his hay.

"Well, Marm Lucy," he said, cheerfully, throwing the reins on Nancy's neck and jumping from the wagon, "is that you sitting there?"

"Yes, Jacob," answered "Marm Lucy," "I am here, and so is Hilda. The evening has been so lovely, we have not had the heart to light the lamps, but have just been sitting here watching the sunset. We'll come in now, though," she added, leading the way into the house. "You'll be wanting some supper, my man. Or did you stop at Cousin Sarah's?"

"I stopped at Sary's," replied the farmer. "Ho! Ho! Yes, Sary gave me some supper, though she was in no mood for seeing company. Poor Sary!"

"Why, what was the matter?" asked Dame Hartley as she trimmed and lighted the great lamp and drew the short curtains of red cotton across the windows. "Is Abner sick again!"

"I'll tell you how it was," and he sat down in his great leather chair and stretched his legs out comfortably before him. "Sary bought a new bonnet yesterday!" Farmer Hartley continued. "She's kind of savin', you know, Sary is [Nurse Lucy nodded, with a knowing air], and she hadn't had a new bonnet for ten years. Well, the gals was pestering her, and sayin' she didn't look fit to go to meetin' in the old bonnet, so at last she went and bought a new one. It was one of these newfangled shapes. What was it Lizy called it? Somethin' Chinese, I reckon. Fan Song! That was it!"

"Fanchon, wasn't it, perhaps?" asked Hilda, much amused.

"That's what I said, wasn't it?" said the farmer. "Fan Song, Fan Chong—wal, what's the odds? It was a queer looking thing, anyhow, I should think. Sary showed it to the gals, and

they liked it first rate. Then she laid it on the kitchen table and went upstairs to get some ribbons and stuff to put on it. She rummaged round upstairs, and when she came down, lo and behold, the bonnet was gone! Well, Sary hunted high, and she hunted low. She called the gals, thinkin' they'd played a trick on her, and hidden it for fun. But they hadn't, and they all set to and sarched the house from attic to cellar; but they didn't find hide nor hair of that bonnet. At last Sary give it up and sot down out of breath—mad enough to eat somebody. 'It's been stole!' says she. 'Some ornery critter came along while I was upstairs,' says she, 'and carried it off!' says she. I had come in by that time, and she was telling me all about it. Just at that minute the door opened, and Abner came sauntering in, mild and moony as usual. 'Sary,' says he. "I wouldn't buy no more baskets without handles, if I was you. They aren't convenient to carry,' says he. And with that he sat down on the table—that Fan Chong bonnet! He'd been mixing chicken feed in it, and he'd held it first by one side and then by the other, and he'd dropped it in the mud, too, I reckon, from the looks of it. You never seed such a looking thing in all your born days as that bonnet was. Sary, she looked at it, and then she looked at Abner, and then at the bonnet again; and then she let fly."

"Poor Sarah!" said Nurse Lucy, wiping tears of merriment from her eyes.

"Oh, what delightfully funny people!" cried Hilda.

The farmer rose suddenly and began to search in his capacious pockets, "I declare! I had forgotten Huldy's letter! Sary and her bonnet put everything else out of my head."

Hilda sprang up in delight to receive the envelope that the farmer handed to her, but her face fell a little when she saw that

it was not from her parents. She reflected, however, that she had had a double letter only two days before, and that she could not expect another for a week, as Mr. and Mrs. Graham wrote always with military punctuality. There was no doubt as to the authorship of the letter. The delicate pointed handwriting, the tiny seal of gilded wax, the faint perfume which the missive exhaled, all said to her at once, "Madge Everton."

With a feeling which, if not quite reluctance, was still not quite alacrity, Hildegarde broke the pretty seal, with its Cupid holding a rose to his lips, and read as follows:

Saratoga, July 20.

My dearest, sweetest Hilda—Can it be possible that you have been away a whole month, and that I have not written to you? I am awfully ashamed! But I have been so too busy, it has been out of the question. Papa decided quite suddenly to come here instead of going to Long Branch; and you can imagine the frantic amount of work Mamma and I had to get ready. One has to dress so much at Saratoga, you know; and we cannot just send an order to Paris, as you do, my dear Queen, for all we want, but we have to get things made here. I have a lovely pale blue Henrietta-cloth, made like that rose-colored gown of yours that I admire so much, and that you said I might copy. Mamma says it was awfully good of you, and that she wouldn't let anyone copy her French dresses if she had them; but I told her you were awfully good, and that was why. Well, then I have a white nun's-veiling, made with triple box-plaits, and a lovely pointed overskirt, copied from a Donovan dress of Mamma's; and a dark-red surah, and oh! a perfect "frou-frou" of wash-dresses, of course; two

sweet white lawns, one trimmed with valenciennes (I hate valenciennes, you know, but Mamma will make me have it, because she thinks it is *jeune fille*!), and one with the new Russian lace; and a pink sateen, and two or three light chambrays.

But now I know you will be dying to hear about my hats; for you always say that the hat makes the costume; and so it does! Well, my dearest, I have one Redfern hat, and only one. Mamma says I cannot expect to have more until I come out, which is bitter. However, this one is a beauty, and yet cost only thirty dollars. It goes well with nearly all my dresses, and is immensely becoming, all the girls say: very high, with long pointed wings and stiff bows. Simple, my dear, doesn't express it! You know I love simplicity; but it is Redferny to a degree, and everybody has noticed it.

Well, my dearest Queen, here am I running on about myself, as if I were not actually expiring to hear about you. What my feelings were, when I called at your house on that fatal Tuesday and was told that you had gone to spend the summer on a farm in the depths of the country, passes my power to tell. I could not ask your mother many questions, for you know I am always a little bit afraid of her, though she is perfectly lovely to me! She was very quiet and sweet, as usual, and spoke as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a brilliant society girl (for that is what you are, Hilda, even though you are only a school girl; and you never can be anything else!) to spend her summer in a wretched farmhouse, among pigs and cows and dreadful ignorant people. Of course, Hilda dearest, you know that my admiration for your mother is simply immense, and that I

would not for worlds say one syllable against her judgment and that of your military angel of a father; but I must say it seemed to me more than strange. I assure you I hardly closed my eyes for several nights, thinking of the misery you must be undergoing; for I know you, Hildegarde! And the thought of my proud, fastidious, high-bred Queen being condemned to associate with clowns and laborers was really more than I could bear. Do write to me, darling, and tell me how you are enduring it. You were always so sensitive; why, I can see your lip curl now, when any of the girls did anything that was not tout à fait comme il faut! And the air with which you used to say, "The little things, my dear, are the only things!" How true it is! I feel it more and more every day. So do write at once, and let me know all about your dear self. I picture you to myself sometimes, pale and thin, with the "white disdain" that some poet or other speaks of, in your face, but enduring all the horrors that you must be subjected to with your own dignity. Dearest Hilda, you are indeed a heroine!

Always, darling,

Your own deeply devoted and sympathizing
Madge.

Hildegarde looked up after reading this letter, and, curiously enough, her eyes fell directly on a little mirror which hung on the wall opposite. In it she saw a rosy, laughing face, which smiled back mischievously at her. There were dimples in the cheeks, and the gray eyes were fairly dancing with life and joyousness. Where was the "white disdain," the dignity, the pallor and emaciation? Could this be Madge's Queen Hildegarde? Or rather, thought the girl, with a sudden revulsion

of feeling, could this Hildegard ever have been the other? The form of "the pert girl" long since dissociated from her thoughts and life, seemed to rise and stare at her with cold, disdainful eyes and supercilious curl of the lip.

Oh dear! How dreadful it was to have been so odious! How could poor dear Papa and Mamma, bless them, have endured her as they did, so patiently and sweetly? But they should see when they came back! She had only just begun yet; but there were two months still before her, and in that time what could she not do? They should be surprised, those dear parents! And Madge—why, Madge would be surprised, too. Poor Madge! To think of her in Saratoga, prinking and preening herself like a gay bird in the midst of a whirl of dress and diamonds and gaiety, with no fields, no woods, no glen, no—no kitchen!

Hilda looked about the room which she had learned so to love, trying to fancy Madge Everton in it; remembering, too, the bitterness of her first feeling about it. The lamplight shone cheerily on the yellow painted walls, the shining floor, the gleaming brass, copper, and china. It lighted up the red curtains and made a halo round good Nurse Lucy's head as she bent over her sewing; it played on the farmer's silver-bowed spectacles as he pored with knitted brows and earnest look over the weekly paper which he had brought from the village. The good, kind farmer! Hilda gazed at him as he sat all unconscious, and wondered why she had not seen at once how handsome he really was. The broad forehead, with its deep, thoughtful furrows; the keen, yet kindly blue eyes; the firm, perhaps obstinate, mouth, which could speak so wisely and smile so cordially—all these combined to make up what the newspapers would call a "singularly attractive exterior." And "Oh! How

good he has been to me!" thought Hilda. "I believe he is the best man in the world, next to Papa." Then she thought of Madge again and tried to fancy her in her Redfern hat—pretty Madge, with her black eyes and curly fringe, under the "simplicity" of the heaven-aspiring wings and bows, and as she smiled at the image, there rose beside it the fair head of Pink Chirk, looking out like a white rose from the depths of her dingy straw tunnel. Then she fancied herself saying airily (she knew just how she used to say it), "The little things, my dear, are the only things!" And then she laughed aloud at the very funniness of it.

"Hut! tut!" said Farmer Hartley, looking up from his paper with a smile. "What's all this? Are you keepin' all the jokes to yerself, Huldy?"

"It is only my letter that is so funny," replied Hilda. "I don't believe it would seem so funny to you, Farmer Hartley, because you don't know the writer. But have you finished your paper, and are you ready for Robin Hood?"

"Well, I am, Huldy!" said the good farmer, laying aside his paper and rubbing his hands with an air of pleasurable anticipation.

Chapter 9

The Old Captain



et—me—see!” said Farmer Hartley as he gathered up the reins and turned old Nancy’s head towards the village. Hildegarde, on the seat beside him, turned back to wave a merry farewell to Nurse Lucy, who stood smiling in the porch. “Let—me—see! Have you been off the farm before, Huldy, since you came here?”

“Not once!” replied Hilda, cheerily. “And I don’t believe I should be going now, Farmer Hartley, if it were not for Pink’s hat. I promised myself that she should not wear that ugly straw sun bonnet again. I wonder why anything so hideous was ever invented.”

“A straw bonnet, do you mean?” said the farmer. “Somethin’ like a long sugar-scoop, or a tunnel like?”

“Yes, just that!” said Hilda. “It was coming down over her poor dear eyes so that she cannot see anything except for a few inches straight before her.”

“Well!” said the farmer, meditatively. “I remember when them bonnets was considered real handsome. Marm Lucy had one when she was a gal; I remember it right well. It was white straw with blue ribbons on top of it. It came close round her

pretty face, and I used to have to sidle along and get round in front of her before I could get a look at her. I had rather a grudge against the bonnet on that account; but I supposed it was handsome, as everybody said so."

Soon, they were rattling through the main street of the little village and stopped before a little shop, in the window of which were displayed some rather forlorn looking hats and bonnets.

"Here you are, Huldyl!" said the farmer, pointing to the shop with a flourish of his whip. "Here's where you get the styles first hand. You have to come from New York to Glenfield to get the real thing, you see."

"I see!" laughed Hilda, springing lightly from the wagon.

"I'll call for you in about half an hour." And with a kindly nod, the farmer drove away down the street.

Hildegarde entered the dingy little shop with some misgivings. "I hope I shall find something fresh!" she said to herself. "Those things in the window look as if they had been there since the Flood." She quickly made friends with the brisk little milliner, and they were soon turning over the meager store of hats, trimmed and untrimmed.

"This is real fancy!" said the little woman, lifting with honest pride an alarming structure of green satin, which some straggling cock's feathers were doing their best to hide.

Hilda shuddered, but said pleasantly, "Rather heavy for summer; don't you think so? It would be better for a winter hat. What is this?" she added, drawing from the farthest recesses of the box an untrimmed hat of rough yellow straw. "I think perhaps this will do, Miss Bean."

"Oh my land, no! You don't want that!" cried the little

milliner, aghast. "That's only a common hat, and it's been in that box three years. The shape is worn now."

"Never mind!" said Hilda, merrily. "It is perfectly fresh, and I like the shape. Just wait till you see it trimmed, Miss Bean. May I rummage a little among your drawers? I will not toss the things about."

A strip of dotted cloth and a bunch of soft pink roses rewarded her search; and with these and a bit of rose-colored ribbon she proceeded to make the rough straw into so dainty and bewitching a thing that Miss Bean sat fairly petrified with amazement on her little hair-cloth sofa in the back shop. "Why! Why!" she said. "If that isn't the beat of all! It's the prettiest hat I ever did see. You never told me you'd learned the trade!"

This last was rather reproachfully said; and Hilda, much amused, hastened to reassure the good woman.

"Indeed, I never learned the trade," she said. "I take to it naturally, I think. I have watched my mother, who does it much better than I."

"She must be a first-class trimmer, then!" replied Miss Bean, emphatically. "She must work in one of them big houses in New York, I reckon."

Hildegarde laughed; but before she could reply, Miss Bean went on to say, "Well, you're a stranger to me, but you've got a pretty good countenance, and you came with Farmer Hartley; that's reference enough." She paused and reflected, while Hildegarde, putting the finishing touches to the pretty hat, wondered what was coming. "I wasn't calculating to hire help this summer," continued the milliner, "but you're so handy, and your ma could give you ideas from time to time. So if you'd like a job, I'd like to hire you."

The heiress of all the Grahams wanted to laugh at this naïve proposal, but good feeling and good manners alike forbade. She thanked Miss Bean for her kind offer, and explained that she was only spending her school vacation at Hartley Farm; that her time was fully occupied.

The little milliner looked so disappointed that Hilda was seized with a royal impulse and offered to “go over” the hats in the window while she waited for Farmer Hartley and freshen them up a bit.

“Well, I wish you would!” said poor Miss Bean. “The fact is, I haven’t done as well as I wanted to this season. Folks are dreadfully afraid of buying new things these days.”

Then followed a series of small confidences on the cloth sofa, while Hilda’s fingers flew about the forlorn hats and bonnets, changing a ribbon here and a flower there, patting and poking, and producing really marvelous results. Another tale of patient labor, suffering, privation. An invalid mother and an “innocent” brother for this frail little woman to support. Doctors’ bills and hard times and stingy patrons. Hilda’s eyes filled with tears of sympathy, and one great drop fell on the green satin hat, but was instantly covered by the wreath of ivy which was replacing the staring cock’s feathers.

“Well, I declare to gracious!” exclaimed Miss Bean. “You’d never know that for the same hat, now, would ye? I thought it was handsome before, but it’s much more handsome now. I shouldn’t wonder a mite if Mis’ Peasley buys that hat now. Well, I do say, you make a great mistake not going into the trade, for you’re born to it, that’s plain. When a person’s born to a thing, he’s thrown away, you may say, on anything else.”

At this moment came a cheery call of “Huldy! Huldy!” and

Hildegarde, cutting short the little woman's profuse thanks and invitations to call again, bade her a cordial goodbye, and ran out to the wagon, carrying her purchase neatly done up in brown paper.

"Steady there!" said the farmer, making room for her on the seat beside him, and they went jingling back along the street again.

As they passed the queer little shops, with their antiquated signboards, the farmer had something to say about each one.

Now the houses straggled farther and farther apart, and at last the village was fairly left behind. Old Nancy pricked up her ears and quickened her pace a little, looking right and left with glances of pleasure as the familiar fields ranged themselves along either side of the road. Hilda, too, was glad to be in the free country again, and she looked with delight at the banks of fern, the stone walls covered with white starry clematis, and the tangle of blackberry vines which made the pleasant road so fragrant and sweet. She was silent for some time. At last she said, half timidly, "Farmer Hartley, you promised to tell me more about your father some day. Don't you think this would be a good time? I have been so much interested by what I have heard of him."

"That's curious, now," said Farmer Hartley slowly, flicking the dust with the long lash of his whip. "It's curious, Huldy, that you should mention Father just now, because I happened to be thinking of him myself that very minute. Old Father," he added meditatively. "Well, surely, he was a character, Father was. Folks about here," he said, turning suddenly to Hilda and looking keenly at her, "think Father was raving crazy, or mighty nigh to it. But he was nothing of the sort. His mind was as keen as a

razor and as straight-edged, except just on one subject. On that he was, so to say, a little—well—a little odd.”

“And that was—?” queried Hilda.

“Why, you see, Huldý, Father had been a sea-faring man all his days, and he had seen all manner of countries and all manner of folks; and it isn’t to be wondered at if he got a little bit confused sometimes between the things he’d seen and the things he owned. Long’n short of it was, Father thought he had a kind of treasure hid away somewhere, like them pirate fellers used to have—if they did have it!” he added slowly. “I never more than half believed none of those stories; but Father, he thought he had it, and no mistake. ‘Do you think I was five years coasting around Brazil for nothing?’ he says. ‘There are diamonds in Brazil,’ he said. ‘Whole mines of ‘em; and there’s some diamonds out of Brazil too;’ and then he’d wink and laugh out hearty, the way he used. He was always laughing, Father was. When times were hard, he’d say to my mother, ‘Wealthy, we won’t sell the diamonds yet a while. Not this time, Wealthy; but they’re there, you know, my woman, they’re there!’ And when my mother would say, ‘Where to goodness are they, Thomas?’ he’d only chuckle and laugh and shake his head. Then there was his story about the ruby necklace. Oh, how we youngsters used to open our eyes at that! We believed it, too, every word of it.”

“Oh! What was it?” cried Hilda. “Tell me, and I will believe it, too!”

“He used to tell of a Malay pirate,” said the farmer, “that he licked somewhere off in the South Seas. The pirates took to their row boats and paddled off. Father and his crew searched the ship and found a woman locked up in the cabin—an Indian princess, Father said she was. The pirates were holding her for

ransom. Well, Father found out somehow where she come from, and he took her home. He hunted up her parents and handed her over safe and sound. The parents were great people where they lived, and they wanted to give Father a pot of money; but he said he wasn't that kind. 'I'm a Yankee skipper!' he said. 'I don't want any pay for what I've done.' Then the princess, she tried to kiss his hand; but Father said he guessed that wasn't quite proper, and her parents seemed to think so, too. So then she took a ruby necklace off her neck and gave it to him, and made signs that he must keep that, anyhow. Then she said something to one of her parents who spoke a little Portuguese. He told Father that she must keep it to remember her. He said the rubies were strung along on a gold chain. So he took it and said he wasn't likely to forget about it."

The farmer paused, and Hildegard drew a long breath, "Oh!" she cried. "What a delightful story, Farmer Hartley! And you don't believe it? I do—every word of it! I am sure it is true!"

"Well, you see," said the farmer, meditatively. "If it was true, what has become of the necklace? That's what I say. Father believed it, sure enough, and he thought he had that necklace, as sure as you think you have that bonnet in your hand. But it was never found."

"Maybe he sold it?" Hilda suggested.

Farmer Hartley shook his head, "No," he said, "he wasn't that kind. Besides, he thought to the day of his death that he had it, sure enough. 'There's the princess's necklace!' he'd say; 'Don't you forget that, Wealthy! Along with the diamonds, you know.' And then he'd laugh like he was fit to bust. Why, when he was actually dying and couldn't speak well, he called me to him and made signs that he wanted to tell me something. I stooped

down close, and he whispered something, but all I could hear was 'diamonds' and 'dig,' and then in a minute it was all over. Poor old Father! He'd been a good skipper and a good man all his days."

He was silent for a time while Hilda pondered over the story, which she could not make up her mind to disbelieve altogether.

"Well, well! And here we are at the old farm again!" said the farmer presently, as old Nancy turned in at the yellow gate.

Chapter 10

The Party of Pleasure



n a certain lovely afternoon, the three happiest people in the world (so they considered themselves, and they ought to know) were gathered together.

“You should have had the prettiest, Pink,” said Hilda, “but we could not get your chair down into the glen, you know. My poor, dear Pink, you have never seen the glen, have you?”

“No,” answered Pink Chirk, cheerily. “But I have heard so much about it, I really feel as if I had seen it, almost. And, indeed, I don’t think it can be much lovelier than this place.”

However that might be, the place they had chosen was certainly pretty enough to satisfy any one. Not far from Mrs. Chirk’s cottage was a little pine grove, easy of access, and with trees far enough apart to allow the wheeled chair to pass between them. And in the grove, just in a little open space where two or three trees had been cut away, was a great black rock, with ferns growing in all its cracks and crannies, and a tiny birch tree waving like a green and white plume on its top. And at the foot of the rock—oh, what a wonderful thing!—a slender thread of crystal water came trickling out, as cold as ice and as clear as—as itself; for nothing else could be so clear.

Bubble had made a little wooden trough to hold this tiny stream, and it gurgled along the trough and tumbled over the end of it with as much agitation and consequence as if it were the Niagara River in person. And under the rock and beside the stream was a bank of moss and ferns most lovely to behold, most luxurious to sit upon. On this bank sat Queen Hildegarde, with Bubble at her feet as usual; and beside her, in her chair, sat sweet Pink, looking more like a white rose than ever, with her fresh white dimity gown and her pretty hat. Hilda was very busy over a mysterious-looking basket, from whose depths she now drew a large napkin, which she spread on the smooth green moss. A plate of sandwiches came next, and some cold chicken, and six of Dame Hartley's wonderful apple turnovers.

"Now, Bubble," said Hilda, "where are those birch-bark cups that you made for us? I have brought nothing to drink out of."

"I'll fetch 'em, Miss Hildy," cried Bubble, springing up with alacrity. "I clean forgot them. Say, Pink, shall I—? Would you?" and he made sundry enigmatic signs to his sister.

"Yes, certainly," said Pink. "Of course!"

The boy ran off, and Hilda fell to twisting pine tassels together into a kind of fantastic garland, while Pink looked on with beaming eyes.

"Pink," said Hilda, presently, "how is it that you speak so differently from Bubble and your mother—so much better English, I mean? Have you—but no; you told me you never went to school."

"It was Faith," said Pink, with a look of tender sadness—"Faith Hartley. She wanted to be a teacher, and we studied together always. Dear Faith! I wish you had known her, Miss Graham."

"You promised not to call me Miss Graham again, Pink," said Hildegard, reproachfully. "It is absurd, and I won't have it."

"Well, Hilda, then," said Pink, shyly. "I wish you had known Faith, Hilda; you would have loved her very much, I know."

"I am sure I should," said Hilda, warmly. "Tell me more about her. Why did she want to teach when she was so happy at home?"

"She loved children very much," said Pink, "and liked to be with them. She thought that if she studied hard, she could teach them more than the district school teachers about here generally do, and in a better way. I think she would have done a great deal of good," she added, softly.

"Oh! Why did she die?" cried Hilda. "She was so much needed! It broke her father's heart, and her mother's, and almost yours, my Pink. Why was it right for her to die?"

"It was right, dear," said Pink, gently. "That is all we can know. 'Why' isn't answered in this world. My granny used to say—'Never lie! Never pry! Never ask the reason why!'"

Hilda shook her head, and was about to reply earnestly, but at this moment Bubble came bounding back with something in his arms—something covered with an old shawl, something alive, which did not like the shawl, and which struggled, and made plaintive little noises, which the boy tried vainly to repress.

"Say, Miss Hildy," he cried, eagerly, "do you like—be still, you critter; hush, I tell ye!—do you like purps?"

"Purps, Bubble?" repeated Hilda, wonderingly. "What are they?"

"Puppies, he means," whispered Pink.

"Cause if you do," cried the breathless Bubble, still struggling with his shrouded captive, "I've got one here as—well, there! Go



along, you pesky critter, if you will!" For the poor puppy had made one frantic effort and leaped from his arms to the ground, where it rolled over and over, a red and green plaid mass, with a white tail sticking out of one end. On being unrolled, it proved to be a little snow-white, curly creature, with long ears and large, liquid eyes, whose pathetic glance went straight to Hilda's heart.

"Oh, the little darling!" she cried, taking him up in her arms. "The pretty, pretty creature! Is he really for me, Bubble? Thank you very much. I shall love him dearly, I know."

"I'm glad you like him," said Bubble, looking highly gratified. "Hosy Grout gave him and another one to me yesterday over at the village. He was going to drown them, and I wouldn't let him, and he said I might have them if I wanted them. I knew Pink would like to have one, and I thought maybe you liked critters, and so—"

"Good Bubble!" said Hilda, stroking the little dog's curly head. "What shall I call him, Pink? Let us each think of a name, and then choose the best."

There was a pause, and then Hilda said, "I think Jock is a good name. I think I will call him Jock." The others assented, and the puppy was solemnly informed of the fact, and received a chicken-bone in honor of the occasion. Then the three friends ate their dinner, and very merry they were over it. Hildegard crowned Pink with the pine-tassel wreath, and Bubbled begged "Miss Hildy" to sing to them. She readily consented, and sang a ballad so sweetly that the little fat birds sat still on the branches to listen. A faint glow stole into Pink's wan cheek, and her blue eyes sparkled with pleasure; while Bubble bobbed his head and testified his delight by drumming with his heels on the ground.

On the walk home, Hilda walked by her friend's chair. "My Pink," said Hildegarde, tenderly, "I should like you to have all the pleasant and bright and lovely things in the world."

"Well, I have the best of them," said Pink Chirk, smiling brightly.

I have home and love and friends and flowers. And as for the rest, why, dear Hilda, what is the use in thinking about things one has not?"

After this, which was part of Pink's little code of philosophy, she fell amusing happily, while Hilda walked beside her in a kind of silent rage, almost hating herself for the fullness of vigor, the superabundant health and buoyancy, which she felt in every limb. She looked sidelong at the transparent cheek, the wasted frame, the unearthly radiance of the blue eyes. This girl was just her own age and had never walked! It could not, it must not be so always. Thoughts thronged into her mind of the great New York physicians and the wonders they had wrought. Might it not be possible? Could not something be done? The blood coursed more quickly through her veins, and she laid her hand on that of the crippled girl with a sudden impulse of protection and tenderness.

Pink Chirk looked up with a wondering smile. "Why, Hilda," she said, "you look like the British warrior queen you told me about yesterday."

Chapter 11

The Warrior Queen



appily, happily, the days and weeks slipped by at Hartley Farm; and now September was half gone, and in two weeks more Hilda's parents would return. The letter had just arrived that fixed the date of their homecoming, and Hildegard had carried it upstairs to feast on it in her own room. She sat by the window in the little white rocking chair and read the words over and over again. In two weeks—really in two little weeks—she should see her mother again! It was too good to be true.

“Dragons, do you hear?” she cried, turning towards the wash-handstand. “You have seen my mother, dragons, and she has washed her little blessed face in your bowl. I should think that might have stopped your fighting, if anything could. Or have you been waving your paws for joy ever since? I may have been unjust to you, Dragons.”

The blue dragons, as usual, refused to commit themselves; and, as usual, the gilt cherubs round the looking-glass were shocked at their rudeness, and tried to atone for it by smiling as hard as they possibly could.

“Such dear, sympathetic cherubs!” said the happy girl,

bending forward to kiss one of them as she was brushing her hair. "You do not fight and glower when one tells you that one's mother is coming home. I know you are glad, you dear old things!"

And then, suddenly, even while she was laughing at the cherubs, a thought struck her that sent a pang through her heart. The cherubs would still smile, just the same, when she was gone! Ah! It was not all delight, this great news. There was sorrow mingled with the rapture. Her heart was with her parents, of course. The mere thought of seeing her mother's face, of hearing her father's voice, sent the blood dancing through her veins. And yet—she must leave the farm; she must leave Nurse Lucy and the farmer, and they would miss her. They loved her; ah! How could they help it when she loved them so much? And the pain came again at her heart as she recalled the sad smile with which the farmer had handed her this letter. "Good news for you, Huldy," he said, "but bad for the rest of us, I reckon!" Had he had word also, or did he just know that this was about the time they had meant to return? Oh, but she would come out so often to the farm! Papa and Mamma would be willing, would wish her to come; and she could not live long at a time in town, without refreshing herself with a breath of real air, country air. She might have wilted along somehow for sixteen years; but she had never been really alive—had she?—till this summer.

Pink and Bubble, too, they would miss her almost as much! But that did not trouble her, for she had a plan in her head for Pink and Bubble—a great plan, which was to be whispered to Papa almost the very moment she saw him—not quite the very moment, but the next thing to it. The plan would please Nurse

Lucy and the farmer, too—would please them almost as much as it delighted her to think about it.

Happy thought! She would go down now and tell the farmer about it. Nurse Lucy was lying down with a bad headache, she knew; but the farmer was still in the kitchen. She heard him moving about now, though he had said he was going off to the orchard. She would steal in softly and startle him, and then—

Full of happy and loving thoughts, Hildegard slipped quietly down the stairs and across the hall and peeped in at the kitchen door to see what the farmer was doing. He was at the farther end of the room, with his back turned to her, stooping down over his desk. What was he doing? What a singular attitude he was in! Then, all in a moment, Hilda's heart seemed to stop beating, and her breath came thick and short; for she saw that this man before her was not the farmer. The farmer had not long elf-locks of black hair straggling over his coat-collar; he was not round-shouldered or bow-legged. Above all, he would not be picking the lock of his own desk, for this was what the man before her was doing.

Silent as her own shadow, Hildegard slipped back into the hall and stood still a moment, collecting her thoughts. What should she do? Call Dame Hartley? The "poor dear" was suffering much, and why should she be disturbed? Run to find the farmer? She might have to run all over the farm! No; she would attend to this herself. She was not in the least afraid. She knew pretty well what ugly face would look up at her when she spoke, for she felt sure that the slouching, ungainly figure was that of Simon Hartley. Her heart burned with indignation against the graceless, thankless churl who could rob the man on whose charity he had been living for two years. She made a

step forward, with words of righteous wrath on her lips, then paused, as a new thought struck her. This man was an absolute ruffian; and though she believed him to be an absolute coward also, still, he must know that she and Dame Hartley were alone in the house. He must know also that the farmer was at some distance, else he would not have ventured to do this.

What should she do? she asked herself again. She looked round her, and her eyes fell upon the old horse-pistol which rested on a couple of hooks over the door. The farmer had taken it down only a day or two before, to show it to her and tell her its story. It was not loaded, but Simon did not know that. She stepped lightly up on a chair and in a moment had taken the pistol down. It was a formidable-looking weapon, and Hildegarde surveyed it with much satisfaction as she turned once more to enter the kitchen. Unloaded as it was, it gave her a feeling of entire confidence; and her voice was quiet and steady as she said:

“Simon Hartley, what are you doing to your uncle’s desk?”

The man started violently and turned round, his hands full of papers, which he had taken from one of the drawers. He changed color when he saw “the city gal,” as he invariably termed Hilda, and he answered sullenly, “Getting something for Uncle.”

“That is not true,” said Hildegarde, quietly. “I have heard your uncle expressly forbid you to go near that desk. Put those papers back!”

The man hesitated, his little ferret eyes shifting uneasily from her to the desk and back again. “I guess I’m not going to take orders from you!” he muttered, huskily.

“Put those papers back!” repeated Hildegarde sternly, with a sudden light in her gray eyes which made the rascal step

backward and thrust the papers hurriedly into the drawer. After which he began to bluster, as is the manner of cowards. "Pretty thing, city gals come waltzing round with their airs an'—"

"Shut the drawer!" said Hildegarde, quietly.

But Simon's sluggish blood was warmed by his little bluster, and he took courage as he reflected that this was only a slight girl, and that no one else was in the house except "Old Marm," and that many broad meadows intervened between him and the farmer's stout arm. He would frighten her a bit and get the money after all.

"We'll see about that!" he said, taking a step towards Hilda, with an evil look in his red eyes. "I'll settle a little account with you first, my fine lady. I'll teach you to come spyin' round on me this way. You haven't given me a civil word since you come here, and I'll pay you—"

Here Simon stopped suddenly, for without a word Hildegarde had raised the pistol (which he had not seen before, as her hand was behind her) and leveled it full at his head, keeping her eyes steadily fixed on him. With a howl of terror, the wretch staggered back, putting up his hands to ward off the expected shot.

"Don't shoot!" he gasped, while his color changed to a livid green. "I—I didn't mean nothin', I promise I didn't, Miss Graham. I was only—foolin'!" He tried to smile a sickly smile, but his eyes fell before the stern glance of the gray eyes fixed so unwaveringly on him.

"Go to your room!" said Hilda, briefly. He hesitated. The lock clicked, and the girl took deliberate aim.

"I'm goin'!" shrieked the rascal. He began backing towards the door, while Hilda followed step by step, still covering him

with her deadly weapon. They crossed the kitchen and the back hall in this way, and Simon stumbled against the narrow stairs which led to his attic room.

"I don't dare turn around to go up!" he whined. "You'll shoot me in the back."

No answer; but the gun's lock clicked again, more ominously than before. He turned and fled up the stairs, muttering curses under his breath. Hildegarde closed the door at the foot of the stairs, which generally stood open, bolted it, and pushed a heavy table against it. Then she went back into the kitchen, sat down in her own little chair, and—laughed!

Yes, laughed! The absurdity of the whole episode, the ruffian quaking and fleeing before the empty pistol, her own martial fierceness and determination, struck her with irresistible force, and peal after peal of silvery laughter rang through the kitchen. Perhaps it was partly hysterical, for her nerves were unconsciously strung to a high pitch; but she was still laughing, and still holding the terrible pistol in her hand, when Dame Hartley entered the kitchen, looking startled and uneasy.

"Dear Hilda," said the good woman, "what has been going on? I thought surely I heard a man's voice here. And—why! Good gracious, child! What are you doing with that pistol?"

Hildegarde saw that there was nothing for it but to tell the simple truth, which she did in as few words as possible, trying to make light of the whole episode. But Dame Hartley was not to be deceived and saw at once the full significance of what had happened. She was deeply moved. "My dear, brave child," she said, kissing Hilda warmly. "To think of your facing that great villain and driving him away! The courage of you! Though to be sure, anyone could see it in your eyes."

“Oh! It was not I who frightened him,” said honest Hilda. “It was the old pistol.” But Nurse Lucy only shook her head and kissed her again. The thought of Simon’s ingratitude and treachery next absorbed her mind, and tears of anger stood in her kind blue eyes.

“It was a black day for my poor man,” she said, “when he brought that fellow to the house. I mistrusted him from the first look at his sulky face. A man who can’t look you in the eyes—well, there! That’s my opinion of him!”

“Why did the farmer bring him here?” asked Hilda. “I have often wondered.”

“Why, ‘tis a long story, my dear,” said Nurse Lucy, smoothing her apron and preparing for a comfortable chat. (“For,” she said, “Simon will not dare to stir from his room, even if he could get out, which he can’t.”) “Of all his brothers, my husband loved his brother Simon best. He was a handsome, clever fellow, Simon was. Don’t you remember, my dear, Farmer speaking of him one day when you first came here, and telling how he wanted to be a gentleman; and I turned the talk when you asked what became of him?” Hilda nodded assent. “Well,” Nurse Lucy continued, “that was because no good came of him, and I knew it vexed Farmer to think on it, let alone Simon’s son being there. It was all through his wanting to be a gentleman that Simon got into bad ways. Making friends with people who had money, he got to thinking he must have it, or must make believe he had it; so he spent all he had, and then—oh, dear!—he forged his father’s name, and the farm had to be mortgaged to get him out of prison; and then he took to drinking, and went from bad to worse, and finally died in misery and wretchedness. Dear, dear! It almost broke Jacob’s heart, that it did. He had tried,

if ever a man tried, to save his brother; but 'twas of no use. It seemed as if he was bound to ruin himself, and nothing could stop him. When he died, his wife (he married her, thinking she had money, and it turned out she hadn't a penny) took the child and went back to her own people, and we heard nothing more till about two years ago, when this boy came to Jacob with a letter from his mother's folks. She was dead, and they said they couldn't do for him any longer, and he didn't seem inclined to do for himself. Well, that is the story, Hilda dear. He has been here ever since, and he has been no comfort, no pleasure to us, I must say; but we have tried to do our duty by him, and I hoped he might feel in his heart some gratitude to his uncle. And now to think of it! To think of it! How shall I tell my poor man?"

At this moment Farmer Hartley's step was heard in the porch, and Nurse Lucy rose hurriedly. "Don't say anything to him, Hilda dear," she whispered. "Anything about Simon, I mean. I'll tell him tomorrow, but I don't want to trouble him tonight. This is our Faith's birthday—seventeen years old she would have been today, and it's been a right hard day for Jacob! I'll tell him about it in the morning."

Alas! When morning came it was too late. The kitchen door was swinging idly open; the desk was broken open and rifled; and Simon Hartley was gone, and with him the savings of ten years' patient labor.

Chapter 12 - Part 1

The Old Mill



It was a sad group that sat in the pleasant kitchen that bright September morning. The good farmer sat before his empty desk, seeming half stupefied by the blow which had fallen so suddenly upon him, while his wife hung about him, reproaching herself bitterly for not having put him on his guard the night before. Hildegarde moved restlessly about the kitchen, setting things to rights, as she thought, though in reality she hardly knew what she was doing, and had already carefully deposited the teapot in the coal-hod, and laid the broom on the top shelf of the dresser. Her heart was full of wrath and sorrow—fierce anger against the miserable wretch who had robbed his benefactor, and sympathy for her kind friends, brought thus suddenly from comfort to distress. For she knew now that the money which Simon had stolen had been drawn from the bank only two days before to pay off the mortgage on the farm.

“I wouldn’t mind the money,” Farmer Hartley was saying, even now, “if I had been saving it just to spend or lay by. It hurt to have Simon’s son take it—my brother Simon’s son, as I always stood by. But it’s hard to let the farm go. I tell you, Marm Lucy,

it's terribly hard!" and he bowed his head upon his hands in a dejection that made his wife weep anew and wring her hands.

"But they will not take the farm from you, Farmer Hartley!" cried Hilda, aghast. "They cannot do that, can they? Why, it was your father's, and your grandfather's before him."

"And his father's before him!" said the farmer, looking up with a sad smile on his kindly face. "But that doesn't make any difference, you see, Hildy. Lawyer Clinch is a hard man, a terribly hard man; and he's always wanted this farm. It's the best piece of land in the whole township, and he wants it for a market farm. Huldy, my gal!" he held out his honest brown hand to Hildegarde, who clasped it affectionately in both of hers, "Will you stay by Marm Lucy and cheer her up a bit? It will be a hard day for her, and she has no daughter of her own now to do for her. But you've grown to be almost a daughter to us, Huldy. God bless ye, child!"

His voice faltered as he laid his other hand for a moment on the girl's fair head; then, turning hastily away, he took up his battered straw hat and went slowly out of the house, an older man, it might have been by ten years, than he had been the night before.

Right daughterly did Hilda show herself that day, and Faith herself could hardly have been more tender and helpful. Feeling intuitively that work was the best balm for a sore heart, she begged for Nurse Lucy's help and advice in one and another item of household routine. Then she bethought her of the churning, and felt that if this thing was to befall, it could not have better befallen than on a Tuesday, when the great blue churn stood ready in the dairy, and the cream lay thick and yellow in the shining pans.



“Well, that’s a fact!” sighed Nurse Lucy. “If I hadn’t forgotten my butter in all this trouble! And it must be made, sorrow or smiles, as the old saying is. Come with me, Hilda dear, if you will. Your face is the only bright thing I can see this sad day.”

So they went together into the cool dairy, where the light came in dimly through the screen of clematis that covered the window; Hilda bared her round white arms, and Nurse Lucy pinned back her calico sleeves from a pair that were still shapely, though brown, and each took a skimmer and set earnestly to work. The process of skimming cream is in itself a soothing, not to say an absorbing one. To push the thick, yellow ripples, piling themselves upon the skimmer, across the pan; to see it drop, like melted ivory, into the cream bowl; to pursue floating cream islands round and round the pale and mimic sea—who can do this long, and not be comforted in some small degree, even in the midst of heavy sorrow? Also there is joy and a never failing sense of achievement when the butter first splashes in the churn. So Nurse Lucy took heart and churned and pressed and molded her butter; and though some tears fell into it, it was none the worse for that.

But as she stamped each ball with the familiar stamp—“How many more times,” said the good woman, “shall I use this stamp; and what kind of butter will they make who come after me?” and her tears flowed again. “Lawyer Clinch keeps a hired girl, and I never saw real good butter made by a hired girl. They haven’t the feeling for it; and there’s feeling in butter making as much as in anything else.”

But here Hilda interposed and gently hinted that there ought now to be “feeling” about getting the farmer’s dinner. “We must have the things he likes best,” she said, “for it will be

hard enough to make him eat anything. I will make that apple pudding that he likes so much; and there is the fowl for the pie, you know, Nurse Lucy.”

The little maid was away on a vacation, so there was plenty of work to be done. Dinner time came and went; and it was not till she had seen Dame Hartley safe established on her bed (for tears and trouble had brought on a sick headache) and tucked her up under the red quilt, with a bottle of hot water and a bowl of cracked ice by her side—it was not till she had done this, and sung one or two of the soothing songs that the good woman loved, that Hilda had a moment to herself. She ran out to say a parting word to the farmer, who was just starting for the village in the forlorn hope, which in his heart he knew to be vain, of getting an extension of time from Lawyer Clinch while search was being made for the wretched Simon.

When old Nancy had trotted away down the lane, Hilda went back and sat down in the porch, very tired and sad at heart. It seemed so hard, so hard that she could do nothing to save her friends from the threatening ruin. She thought of her father, with a momentary flash of hope that made her spring from her seat with a half articulate cry of joy; but the hope faded as she remembered that he had probably just started for the Yosemite Valley, and that there was no knowing when or where a despatch would reach him. She sighed and sank back on the bench with a hopeless feeling. Presently, she thought of her little dog whom she had not seen all day. Jock had grown very dear to her heart and was usually her inseparable companion, except when she was busy with household tasks. Accordingly, when Hilda was occupied in the house, Jock always sat in the back porch, with his back turned to the kitchen door and his tail

cocked very high, while one ear listened eagerly for the sound of Hilda's footsteps and the other was thrown negligently forward, to convey the impression that he did not really care, but only waited to oblige her. And the moment the door opened, and she appeared with her hat on, oh, the rapture! The shrieks and squeaks and leaps of joy, the wriggings of body and frantic waggings of tail that ensued!

So this morning, what with all the trouble, and with her knowledge of his views, Hildegarde had not thought to wonder where Jock was. But now it struck her that she had exchanged no greeting with him since last night; that she had heard no little impatient barks, no flapping of tail against the door by way of reminder. Where could the little fellow be? She walked round the house, calling and whistling softly. She visited the barn and the cowshed and all the places Jock might be. But no Jock was to be seen. "Perhaps he has gone over to see Will," she thought, with a feeling of relief. Indeed, this was very possible, as the two dogs were very brotherly and frequently exchanged visits, sometimes acting as letter-carriers for their two mistresses, Pink and Hilda. If Jock was at Pink's house, he would be well cared for, and Bubble would—but here Hildegarde started, as a new perplexity arose. Where was Bubble? They had actually forgotten the boy in the confusion and trouble of the day. He had not certainly come to the house, as he invariably did; and the farmer had not spoken of him when he came in at noon. Perhaps Pink was ill, Hilda thought, with fresh alarm. If it should be so, Bubble could not leave her, for Mrs. Chirk was nursing a sick woman two or three miles away, and there were no other neighbors nearer than the farm. "Oh, my Pink!" cried Hilda. "And I cannot go to you at once, for Nurse Lucy must

not be left alone in her trouble. I must wait, wait patiently till Farmer Hartley comes back.”

Patiently she tried to wait. She stole up to her room, and taking up one of her best-beloved books, she lost herself for a while in the pages. But even this could not hold her long in her restless frame of mind, so she went downstairs again, and out into the soft, golden September air, and fell to pacing up and down the gravel walk before the house. Presently, there was a rustling in the bushes, then a hasty, joyful bark, and a little dog sprang forward and greeted Hildegarde with every demonstration of affection. “Jock! My own dear little Jock!” she cried, stooping down to caress her favorite. But as she did so she saw that it was not Jock, but Will, Pink’s dog, which was bounding and leaping about her. Much puzzled, she nevertheless patted the little fellow and shook paws with him and told him she was glad to see him. “But where is your brother?” she cried. “Oh! Willy dog, where is Jock, and where is Bubble? Will! Speak!”

Will “spoke” as well as he could, giving a short bark at each repetition of the well-known name. Then he jumped up on Hilda and threw back his head with a peculiar action which at once attracted her attention. She took him up in her arms, and lo! There was a piece of paper, folded and pinned securely to his collar. Hastily setting the dog down, she opened the note and read as follows:

Miss Hildy,

Simon Hartley came here early this mornin and he says to me I was diggin potatoes for dinner and he come and leaned on the fence and says he I’ve fixed your city gal up fine and I says what yer mean. I mean what I says. She thinks a heap of

that dorg I know that ain't spelled right but it's the way he said it. Well says he you tell her to look for him in the pit of the old mill says he. And then he larf LAUGHED I was bound I'd get it Miss Hildy I don't see why they spell a thing g and say it f. Then he went away. And I run after him to make him tell me what he d been up to and climbin over the wall I ketched my foot on a stone and the stone come down on my foot and me with it, and I didn't know anything till Simon had gone and my foot swoll up so I couldn't walk and I wouldnt a minded its hurtin Miss Hildy but it s like there wornt no bones in it Pink says I sprante it bad and I started to go over to the Farm on all fours to tell you but I didn't know anything again and Pink made me come back. We couldnt nether on us get hold of Will but now we got him I hope he l go strait, Miss Hildy Pink wanted to write this for me but I druther write myself you aint punk tuated it she says. She can punk tuate it herself better n I can I an ti cip ate I says. From

Zerubbabel Chirk

P.S. I wisht I could get him out for you Miss Hildy.

Chapter 12 - Part 2

If Bubble's letter was funny, Hilda had no heart to see the fun. Her tears flowed fast as she realized the fate of her pretty little pet and playfellow. The vindictive wretch, too cowardly to face her again, had taken his revenge upon the harmless little dog. All day long poor Jock had been in that fearful place! He was still only a puppy, and she knew he could not possibly get out if he had really been thrown into the pit of the great wheel. But—and she gave a cry of pain as the thought struck her—perhaps it was only his lifeless body that was lying there. Perhaps the ruffian had killed him and thrown him down there afterwards. She started up and paced the walk hurriedly, trying to think what she had best do. Her first impulse was to fly at once to the glen; but that was impossible, as she must not, she felt, leave Dame Hartley. No one was near; they were quite alone. Again she said, "I must wait; I must wait till Farmer Hartley comes home." But the waiting was harder now than it had been before. She could do nothing but pace up and down, up and down, like a caged panther, stopping every few minutes to throw back her head and listen for the longed-for sound—the sound of approaching wheels.

Softly, the shadows fell as the sun went down. The purple twilight deepened, and the stars lighted their silver lamps, while all the soft night noises began to make themselves heard as the voices of day died away. But Hilda had ears for only one sound.

At length, out of the silence (or was it out of her own fancy?) she seemed to hear a faint, clicking noise. She listened intently. Yes, there it was again. There was no mistaking the click of old Nancy's hoofs, and with it was a dim suggestion of a rattle, a jingle. Yes, beyond a doubt, the farmer was coming. Hildegarde flew into the house, and met Dame Hartley just coming down the stairs. "The farmer is coming," she said, hastily. "He is almost here. I am going to find Jock. I shall be back—" and she was gone before the astonished Dame could ask her a question.

Through the kitchen and out of the back porch sped the girl, only stopping to catch up a small lantern which hung on a nail, and to put some matches in her pocket. Little Will followed her, barking hopefully, and together the two ran swiftly through the barnyard and past the cowshed and took the path which led to the old mill. The way was so familiar now to Hilda that she could have traversed it blindfolded; and this was well for her, for in the dense shade of the beech-plantation, it was now pitch dark. The feathery branches brushed her face and caught the tendrils of her hair with their slender fingers. There was something ghostly in their touch. Hilda was not generally timid, but her nerves had been strung to a high pitch all day, and she no had longer full control of them. She shivered, and bending her head low, called to the dog and hurried on.

Out from among the trees now, into the dim starlit glade she went— down the pine-strewn path, with the noise of falling water from out the beechwood at the right, and the ruined mill looming black before her. Now came the three broken steps. Yes, so far she had no need of the lantern. Round the corner, stepping carefully over the half-buried mill-stone. Groping her way, her hand touched the stone wall, but she drew it back

hastily, so damp and cold the stones were. Darker and darker here; she must light the lantern before she ventured down the long flight of steps. The match spurted, and now the tiny yellow flame sprang up and shed a faint light on the immediate space around her. It only made the outer darkness seem more intense. But no matter, she could see two steps in front of her; and holding the lantern steadily before her, she stepped carefully down and down, until she stood on the firm greensward of the glen. Ah! How different everything was now from its usual aspect. The green and gold were turned into black upon black. The laughing, dimpling, sun-kissed water was now a black, gloomy pool. Hildegard shivered again and held her lantern tighter. She looked fearfully about her as a low wind rustled the branches. They bent towards her as if to clutch her; an angry whisper seemed to pass from one to the other; and an utterly unreasoning terror fell upon the girl. She stood for a moment as if paralyzed with fear, when suddenly the little dog gave a sharp yelp, and leaped up on her impatiently.

The sound startled her into new terror; but in a moment the revulsion came, and she almost laughed aloud. Here was she, a great girl, almost a woman, cowering and shivering, while a tiny puppy, who had hardly any brains at all, was eager to go on. She patted the dog, and "taking herself by both ears," as she expressed it afterwards, walked steadily forward, pushed aside the dense tangle of vines and bushes, and stooped down to enter the black hole which led into the vault of the mill.

A rush of cold air met her, and beat against her face like a black wing that brushed it. It had a mouldy smell. Holding up the lantern, Hildegard crept as best she could through the narrow opening. A gruesome place it was in which she found

herself. Grim enough by daylight, it was now doubly so; for the blackness seemed like something tangible, some shapeless monster which was gathering itself together, and shrinking back, inch by inch, as the little spark of light moved forward. The gaunt beams, the jagged bits of iron, bent and twisted into fantastic shapes, stretched and thrust themselves from every side, and again the girl fancied them fleshless arms reaching out to clutch her. But hark! Was that a sound—a faint sound from the farthest and darkest corner, where the great wheel raised its toothed and broken round from the dismal pit?

“Jock! My little Jock!” cried Hildegarde, “Are you there?”

A feeble sound, the very ghost of a tiny bark, answered her, and a faint scratching was heard. In an instant all fear left Hilda, and she sprang forward, holding the lantern high above her head and calling out words of encouragement and cheer. “Courage, Jock! Cheer up, little man! Missis is here; Missis will save you! Speak to him, Will! Tell him you are here.”

“Wow!” said Will, manfully, scuttling about in the darkness. “Wa-ow!” replied a pitiful squeak from the depths of the wheel-pit. Hilda reached the edge of the pit and looked down. In one corner was a little white bundle, which moved feebly and wagged a piteous tail, and squeaked with faint rapture. Evidently the little creature was exhausted, perhaps badly injured. How should she reach him? She threw the ray of light on the side of the pint. Oh! How dim it was, and how heavy and close the darkness pressed! She saw that it was a rough and jagged wall, with stones projecting at intervals.

A moment’s survey satisfied her. Setting the lantern carefully at a little distance, and bidding Will “charge” and be still, she began the descent, feeling the way carefully with her feet, and

grasping the rough stones firmly with her hands. Down! Down! While the huge wheel towered over her and grinned with all its rusty teeth to see so strange a sight. At last her feet touched the soft earth. In another instant she had Jock in her arms and was caressing him, and saying all sorts of foolish things to him in her delight.

But a cry of pain from the poor puppy, even in the midst of his frantic though feeble demonstrations of joy, told her that all was not right; and she found that one little leg hung limp and was evidently broken. How should she ever get him up? For a moment she stood bewildered; and then an idea came to her, which she has always maintained was the only really clever one she ever had. In her preoccupation of mind, she had forgotten all day to take off the brown holland apron which she had worn at her work in the morning, and it was the touch of this apron which brought her inspiration.

Quick as a flash, she had it off and tied round her neck, pinned up at both ends to form a bag. Then she stooped again to pick up Jock, whom she had laid carefully down while she arranged the apron. As she did so, the feeble ray from the lantern fell on a space where the ground had been scratched up, evidently by the puppy's paws; and in that space something shone with a dull glitter. Hildegard bent lower and found what seemed to be a small brass handle, half covered with earth. She dug the earth away with her hands, and pulled and tugged at the handle for some time without success; but at length the sullen soil yielded, and she staggered back against the wheel with a small metal box in her hands.

No time now to examine the prize, be it what it might. Into the apron bag it went, and on top of it went the puppy, yelping



dismally. Then slowly, carefully, clinging with hands and feet for life and limb, Hilda reascended the wall. Oh, but it was hard work! Her hands were already very sore, and the heavy bundle hung back from her neck and half choked her. Moreover, the puppy was uncomfortable and yelped piteously and struggled in his bonds, while the sharp corner of the iron box pressed painfully against the back of her neck. The jutting stones were far apart, and several times it seemed as if she could not possibly reach the next one. But the royal blood was fully up. Queen Hildegard set her teeth and grasped the stones as if her slender hands were nerved with steel.

At last! At last she felt the edge. The next moment she had dragged herself painfully over it and stood once more on solid ground. She drew a long breath and, hastily untying the apron from her neck, took poor Jock tenderly in one arm, while with the other she carried the lantern and the iron box. Will was jumping frantically about, trying to reach his brother puppy, who responded with squeaks of joy to his enraptured greeting.

"Down, Will!" said Hilda, decidedly. "Down, sir! Lie still, Jocky! We shall be at home soon now. Patience, little dog!" And Jock tried hard to be patient, though it was not pleasant to be squeezed into a ball while his mistress crawled out of the hole, which she did with some difficulty, laden with her triple burden.

However, they were out at last, and speeding back towards the farm as fast as eager feet could carry them. Little thought had Hilda now of forbidding trees or ghostly gloom. Joyfully, she hurried back, up the long steps, along the glade, through the beach-plantation—only laughing now when the feathery fingers brushed her face, and hugging Jock so tight that he squeaked again. Now she saw the lights twinkling in the farmhouse; and

quicken her pace, she fairly ran through lane and barnyard, and finally burst into the kitchen, breathless and exhausted, but radiant. The farmer and his wife, who were sitting with disturbed and anxious looks, rose hastily as she entered.

“Oh, Hilda, dear!” cried Dame Hartley. “We have been terribly frightened about you. Jacob has been searching—But, good gracious, child!” she added, breaking off hastily. “Where have you been, and what have you been doing to get yourself into such a state?”

The farmer gazed in silent astonishment. The girl’s dress was torn and dragged and covered with great spots and splashes of black. Her face was streaked with dirt, her fair hair hanging loose upon her shoulders. Could this be Hilda, the dainty, the spotless? But her eyes shone like stars, and her face, though very pale, wore a look of triumphant delight.

“I have found him!” she said, simply. “My little Jock! Simon threw him into the wheel-pit of the old mill, and I went to get him out. His leg is broken, but I know you can set it, Nurse Lucy. Don’t look so frightened,” she added, smiling, seeing that the farmer and his wife were fairly pale with horror. “It was not so very bad, after all.” And in as few words as might be, she told the story of Bubble’s note and of her strange expedition.

“My child! My child!” cried Dame Hartley, putting her arms round the girl, and weeping as she did so. “How could you do such a fearful thing? Think, if your foot had slipped you might be lying there now yourself, in that dreadful place!” And she shuddered, putting back the tangle of fair hair with trembling fingers.

“Ah, but you see, my foot didn’t slip, Nurse Lucy!” replied Hilda, gaily. “I wouldn’t let it slip! And here I am safe and

sound, so it's really absurd for you to be frightened now, my dear!"

"Why in the world didn't you wait till I came home and let me go down for you?" demanded the farmer, who was secretly delighted with the exploit, though he tried to look very grave.

"Oh! I—I never thought of it!" said Hildegard. "My only thought was to get down there as quickly as possible. So I waited till I heard you coming, for I didn't want to leave Nurse Lucy alone; and then—I went! And I will not be scolded," she added quickly, "for I think I have made a great discovery." She held one hand behind her as she spoke, and her eyes sparkled as she fixed them on the farmer. "Dear Farmer Hartley," she said, "is it true, as Bubble told me, that your father used to go down often into the vault of the old mill?"

"Why, yes, he did, frequently!" said the farmer, wondering. "It was a fancy of his, poking about there. But what—"

"Wait a moment!" cried Hilda, trembling with excitement. "Wait a moment! Think a little, dear Farmer Hartley! Did you not tell me that when he was dying, your father said something about digging? Try to remember just what he said!"

The farmer ran his hand through his shaggy locks with a bewildered look. "What on earth are you driving at, Hildy?" he said. "Father? Why, he didn't say nothin' at the last, except about those crazy diamonds he was always talking about. 'Diamonds,' says he. And then he says 'Dig!' and fell back on the pillow, and that was all."

"Yes!" cried Hilda. "And you never did dig, did you? But now somebody has been digging. Little Jock began, and I finished; and we have found—we have found—" She broke off suddenly, and drawing her hand from behind her back, held up the

iron box. "Take it!" she cried, thrusting it into the astonished farmer's hands and falling on her knees beside his chair. "Take it and open it! I think—oh! I am sure—that you will not lose the farm after all. Open it quickly, please!"

Now much agitated in spite of himself, Farmer Hartley bent himself to the task of opening the box. For some minutes it resisted stubbornly, and even when the lock was broken, the lid clung firmly, and the rusted hinges refused to perform their office. But at length they yielded, and slowly, unwillingly, the box opened. Hilda's breath came short and quick, and she clasped her hands unconsciously as she bent forward to look into the mysterious casket. What did she see?

At first nothing but a handkerchief—a yellow silk handkerchief of curious pattern, carefully folded into a small square and fitting nicely inside the box. That was all; but Farmer Hartley's voice trembled as he said, in a husky whisper, "Father's handkerchief." It was with a shaking hand that he lifted the folds of silk. One look—and he fell back in his chair, while Hildegarde quietly sat down on the floor and cried. For the diamonds were there! Big diamonds and little diamonds—some rough and dull, others flashing out sparks of light, as if they shone the brighter for their long imprisonment, some tinged with yellow or blue, some with the clear white radiance which is seen in nothing else save a dewdrop when the morning sun first strikes upon it. There they lay—a handful of stones, a little heap of shining crystals, but enough to pay off the mortgage on Hartley's Glen and leave the farmer a rich man for life.

Dame Hartley was the first to rouse herself from the silent amaze into which they had fallen. "Well, well!" she said, wiping her eyes. "The ways of Providence are mysterious. To think of

it, after all these years! Why, Jacob! Come, my dear, come! You ain't crying, now that the Lord and this blessed child under Him has taken away all your trouble?"

But the farmer, to his own great amazement, was crying. He sobbed quietly once or twice, then cleared his throat and wiped his eyes with the old silk handkerchief. "Poor ol' Father," he said, simply. "It seems kind of hard that nobody ever believed him, and we let him die thinkin' he was crazy. It seems like I get the reward without having deserved it."

"As if you could have reward enough!" cried Hildegarde, laying her hand on his affectionately. "But, oh! Do just look at them, dear Farmer Hartley! Aren't they beautiful? But what is that peeping out of the cotton-wool beneath? It is something red."

Farmer Hartley felt beneath the cotton which lined the box, and drew out—oh, wonderful—a chain of rubies! Each stone glowed like a living coal as he held it up in the lamplight.

"The princess's necklace!" cried Hilda. "Oh, beautiful! Beautiful! And I knew it was true! I knew it all the time."

The old man fixed a strange look, solemn and tender, on the girl as she stood at his side, radiant and glowing with happiness. Drawing her to him, he clasped the ruby chain round Hilda's neck.

Chapter 13

A Tree Party

nother golden day! But the days would all be golden now, thought Hildegarde. “Oh, how different it is from yesterday!” she cried to Nurse Lucy as she danced about the kitchen. “The sun shone yesterday, but it did us no good. Today, it warms my heart, the good sunshine. And yesterday the trees seemed to mock me, with all their scarlet and gold, but today they are dressed up to celebrate our good fortune. Let us call them in to rejoice with us, Nurse Lucy. Let us have a tree party, instead of a tea party!”

“My dear,” said Dame Hartley, looking up with a puzzled smile, “what do you mean?”

“Oh! I don’t mean to invite the whole forest to supper,” said Hildegarde, laughing. “But you shall see, Nurse Lucy; you shall see. Just wait till this afternoon. I must run now over to Pink’s house and tell her all the wonderful things that have happened, and see how poor Bubble is.”

Away she went like a flash, through the golden fields, down the lane, where the maples made a flaming tent of scarlet over her head, bursting suddenly like a whirlwind into the little cottage, where the brother and sister, both now nearly helpless,

sat waiting with pale and anxious faces. At sight of her, Pink uttered a cry of delight, while Bubble flushed with pleasure; and both were about to pour out a flood of eager questions, when Hilda laid her hand over Pink's mouth and made a sign to the boy. "Two minutes to get my breath!" she cried, panting. "Only two, and then you shall hear all." She spent the two minutes in filling the kettle and presenting Bubble with a pot of peach-marmalade that Dame Hartley had sent him. Then, sitting down by the invalid's chair, she told from beginning to end the history of the past two days. The recital was thrilling enough; and before it was over, the pale cheeks were crimson, and the two pairs of blue eyes blazed with excitement.

"Oh!" cried Bubble, hopping up and down in his chair, regardless of the sprained ankle.

Pink drew the stately head down towards her and kissed the glowing cheek and whispered, "Queen Hildegarde! My queen!"

The tears started to Hilda's eyes as she returned the kiss, but she brushed them away and rose hastily, announcing her intention of "setting things to rights" against Mrs. Chirk's return. "You poor dears!" she cried. "How did you manage yesterday? If I had only known, I would have come and got dinner for you."

"Oh! We got on very well, indeed," replied Pink, laughing. "Though there were one or two mishaps. Fortunately, there was plenty of bread in the cupboard where we could easily reach it, and with that and the molasses jug, we were in no danger of starvation. But Mother had left a custard-pie on the upper shelf, and poor Bubble wanted a piece of it for dinner. But neither of us cripples could get at it, and for a long time we could think of no plan which would make it possible. At last Bubble had

a bright idea. You remember the big fork that Mother uses to take pies out of the oven? Well, he spliced that onto the broom-handle, and then, standing well back, so that he could see (on one foot, of course, for he couldn't put the other to the ground), he reached for the pie. It was a dreadful moment, Hilda! The pie slid easily onto the fork, and for a moment all seemed to promise well; but the next minute, just as Bubble began to lower it, he wavered on his one foot—only a little, but enough to send the poor pie tumbling to the ground."

"Poor pie!" cried Bubble. "Well, I like that! Poor me, I should say. I've had bread and molasses three meals running, Miss Hildy. Now don't you think that old pie might have come down straight?"

"You should have seen his face, poor dear!" cried Pink. "He really couldn't laugh—for almost two minutes."

"Well, I suppose 'twas kind of funny," the boy admitted, while Hilda laughed merrily over the catastrophe. "But there! When one's used to standing on two legs, it's dreadfully unhandy trying to stand on one. We'll have bread and jam today," he added, with an affectionate glance at the pot of marmalade, "and that's a good enough dinner for the governor of the state."

"Indeed, you shall have more than that!" cried Hildegarde. "Nurse Lucy does not need me before dinner, so I will get your dinner for you."

So the active girl made up the fire anew, swept the floor, dusted tables and chairs, and made the little room look tidy and cheerful, as Pink loved to see it. Then she ran down to the cellar and reappeared with a basket of potatoes and a pan of rosy apples.

"Now we will perform a trio!" she said. "Pink, you shall peel

and core the apples for applesauce, and Bubble shall pare the potatoes, while I make biscuit and gingerbread.”

Accordingly, she rolled up her sleeves and set busily to work. The others followed her example, and fingers and tongues moved ceaselessly.

“I’d like to get hold of Simon Hartley!” said Bubble, slicing at a big potato vengefully. “Yah! Ornery critter! He was just standing there and grinning at me over the wall, and I couldn’t do anything! Then not to be able to crawl even! I swear . . . I mean, I tell ye, now, I didn’t like that.”

“Poor Bubble!” said Hilda, compassionately, “I’m sure you didn’t. And did he really start to crawl over to the farm, Pink?”

“Indeed, he did!” replied Pink. “Nothing that I could say would keep him from trying it, so I bandaged his ankle as well as I could, and off he started. But he fainted twice before he got to the gate, so there was nothing for it but to crawl back again, and—have the knees of his trousers mended.”

“Dear boy!” said Hilda, patting the curly head affectionately. “Good, faithful boy! I shall think a great deal more of it, Bubble, than if you had been able to walk all the way. And, after all,” she added, “I am glad I had to do it myself—go down to the mill, I mean. It is something to remember! I would not have missed it.”

“Nor would I!” cried Bubble, enthusiastically. “I’d have done it for you twenty times, you know that, Miss Hildy.”

When the simple meal was prepared and set out, Hilda bade farewell to her two friends and flitted back to the farm. Mrs. Chirk was to return in the evening, so she felt no further anxiety about them.

She found the farmer just returned from the village in high spirits. Squire Gaylord had examined the diamonds,

pronounced them of great value, and had readily advanced the money to pay off the mortgage, taking two or three large stones as security. Lawyer Clinch had reluctantly received his money and relinquished all claim upon Hartley's Glen, though with a very bad grace.

Nurse Lucy explained, "He kind of insinuated that the diamonds had probably been stolen by Father or me; he couldn't say which. And he said something about inquiring into the matter. But Squire Gaylord shut him up pretty quickly, and Lawyer Clinch hadn't nothin' more to say after that."

When dinner was over and everything cleaned up, Hildegarde sent Dame Hartley upstairs to take a nap and escorted the farmer as far as the barn on his way to the turnip field. Then, "the coast being clear," she said to herself, "we will prepare for the tree party."

Accordingly, arming herself with a stout pruning knife, she took her way to the "wood lot," which lay on the north side of the house. The splendor of the trees, which were now in full autumnal glory, gave Hilda a sort of rapture as she approached them. What had she ever seen so beautiful as this—the shifting, twinkling myriads of leaves, blazing with every imaginable shade of color above the black, straight trunks; the deep, translucent blue of the sky bending above; the golden light which transfused the whole scene; the crisp freshness of the afternoon air? She wanted to sing, to dance, to do everything that was joyous and free. But now she had work to do. She visited all her favorite trees—the purple ash, the vivid, passionate maples, the oaks in their sober richness of murrey and crimson. On each and all, she levied contributions, cutting armful after armful, and carried them to the house, piling them

in splendid heaps on the shed floor. Then, after carefully laying aside a few specially perfect branches, she began the work of decoration. Over the chimney-piece she laid great boughs of maple, glittering like purest gold in the afternoon light, which streamed broadly in through the windows. Others—scarlet, pink, dappled red, and yellow—were placed over the windows, the doors, the dresser. She filled the corners with stately oak-boughs, and made a bower of the purple ash in the bow window—Faith's window. Then she set the tea table with the best china, every plate and dish resting on a mat of scarlet leaves, while a chain of yellow ones outlined the shining square board. A tiny scarlet wreath encircled the tea-kettle, and even the butter dish displayed its golden balls beneath an arch of flaming crimson. This done, she filled a great glass bowl with purple-fringed asters and long, gleaming sprays of golden-rod, and setting it in the middle of the table, stood back with her head a little on one side and surveyed the general effect.

“Good!” was her final comment. “Very good! And now for my own part.”

She gathered in her apron the branches first selected, and carried them up to her own room, where she proceeded to strip off the leaves and to fashion them into long garlands. As her busy fingers worked, her thoughts flew hither and thither, bringing back the memories of the past few days. Now she stood in the kitchen, pistol in hand, facing the rascal Simon Hartley, and she laughed to think how he had shaken and cowered before the empty weapon. Now she was in the vault of the ruined mill, with a thousand horrors of darkness pressing on her, and only the tiny spark of light in her lantern to keep off the black and shapeless monsters. Now she thought of the kind

farmer, with a throb of pity, as she recalled the hopeless sadness of his face the night before. Just the very night before, only a few hours, and now how different everything was! Her heart gave a little happy thrill to think that she, Hilda, the “city gal,” had been able to help these dear friends in their trouble. They loved her already, she knew that; they would love her more now. Ah! And they would miss her all the more, now that she must leave them so soon.

Then, like a flash, her thoughts reverted to the plan she had been revolving in her mind two days before, before all these strange things had happened. It was a delightful little plan! Pink was to be sent to a New York hospital—the very best hospital that could be found; and Hildegarde hoped—she thought—she felt almost sure that the trouble could be greatly helped, if not cured altogether. And then, when Pink was well, or at least a great, great deal better, she was to come and live at the farm, and help Nurse Lucy, and sing to the farmer, and be all the comfort—no, not all, but nearly the comfort that Faith would have been if she had lived. And Bubble—yes! Bubble must go to school—to a good school, where his bright, quick mind should learn everything there was to learn. Papa would see to that, Hilda knew he would. Bubble would delight Papa! And then he would go to college, and by and by become a famous doctor, or a great lawyer, or—oh! Bubble could be anything he chose, she was sure of it.

So the girl’s happy thoughts flew on through the years that were to come, weaving golden fancies even as her fingers were weaving the gay chains of shining leaves; but let us hope the fancy-chains, airy as they were, were destined to become substantial realities long after the golden wreaths had faded.

But now the garlands were ready, and none too soon; for the shadows were lengthening, and she heard Nurse Lucy downstairs, and Farmer Hartley would be coming in soon to his tea. She took from a drawer her one white frock, the plain lawn which had once seemed so overly plain to her, and with the wreaths of scarlet and gold, she made a very wonderful thing of it. Fifteen minutes careful work, and Hilda stood looking at her image in the glass, well pleased and a little surprised; for she had been too busy of late to think much about her looks and had not realized how sun and air and a free, outdoor life had made her beauty blossom and glow like a rose in mid-June. With a scarlet chaplet crowning her fair locks, bands of gold about her waist and neck and sleeves, and the whole skirt covered with a fantastic tracery of mingled gold and fire, she was a vision of almost startling loveliness. She gave a little happy laugh. "Dear old Farmer!" she said. "He likes to see me fine. I think this will please him." And light as a thistledown, the girl floated downstairs and danced into the kitchen just as Farmer Hartley entered it from the other side.

"Highly-tightly!" cried the good man. "What's all this? Is there a fire? Everything's all ablaze! Why, Hildy! Bless my soul!" He stood in silent delight, looking at the lovely figure before him, with its face of rosy joy and its happy, laughing eyes.

"It's a tree party," explained Hildegard, taking his two hands and leading him forward. "I'm part of it, you see, Farmer Hartley. Do you like it? Is it pretty? It's to celebrate our good fortune," she added; and putting her arm in the old man's, she led him about the room, pointing out the various decorations and asking his approval.

Farmer Hartley admired everything greatly, but in an absent way, as if his mind were preoccupied with other matters. He

turned frequently toward the door, as if he expected some one to follow him. "All for me?" he kept asking. "All for me and Marm Lucy, Hildy? Ye—your not expecting anyone else to tea, now?"

"No," said Hilda, wondering. "Of course not. Who else is there to come? Bubble has sprained his ankle, you know, and Pink—"

"Yes, yes; I know, I know!" said the farmer, still with that backward glance at the door. And then, as he heard some noise in the yard, he added hurriedly: "At the same time, you know, Hildy, people do sometimes drop in to tea—kind of unexpected-like, you understand. And—and—all this pretty show might—might seem to—indicate, you see—"

"Jacob Hartley? What are you up to?" demanded Nurse Lucy, rather anxiously, as she stood at the door watching him intently. "Does your head feel dizzy? You'd better go and lie down; you've had too much excitement for a man of—"

"Oh, you thar, Marm Lucy?" cried the farmer, with a sigh of relief that was half a chuckle, "Now, there! You tell Hildy that folks does sometimes drop in—folks from a considerable distance—" But here he stopped suddenly. And as Hilda, expecting she knew not what, stood with hands clasped together, and beating heart, the door was thrown open, and a strong, cheery voice cried, "Well, General!" Another moment, and she was clasped in her father's arms.

Chapter 14

The Last Word



he lovely autumn is gone, and winter is here. Mr. and Mrs. Graham have long since been settled at home, and Hildegarde is with them. How does it fare with her, the new Hildegarde, under the old influences and amid the old surroundings? For answer, let us take the word of her oldest friend—the friend who “knows Hildegarde!” Madge Everton has just finished a long letter to Helen McIvor, who is spending the winter in Washington, and there can be no harm in our taking a peep into it.

You ask me about Hilda Graham; but, alas! I have nothing pleasant to tell. My dear, Hilda is simply lost to us! It is all the result of that dreadful summer spent among swineherds. You know what the Bible says! I don’t know exactly what, but something terrible about that sort of thing.

Ever since she came home from that odious place, Hilda has been volunteering at hospital and other places of horror. I don’t mean that she has given up school, for she is studying harder than ever; but out of school she is simply swallowed up by these wretched things. I have begged with her almost on my knees. “Hildegarde,” I said one day, “do you realize

that you are practically giving up your whole life? If you once lose your place in Society among those of your own age and position, you NEVER can regain it. Do you realize this, Hilda? For I feel it a solemn duty to warn you!" My dear, she actually laughed and only said, 'Dear Madge, I have only just begun to have any life!' And that was all I could get out of her, for just then some one came in.

But even this is not the worst! Oh, Helen! She has some of the creatures whom she saw this summer, actually staying in the house—in that house, which we used to call Castle Graham, and were almost afraid to enter ourselves, so stately and beautiful it was! There are two of these creatures—a girl about our age, some sort of dreadful cripple, who goes about in a bath-chair, and a freckled imp of a boy.

The girl is at the hospital for treatment, but spends every Sunday at the Grahams', and Hilda devotes most of her spare time to her. The boy is at school—one of the best schools in the city. "But who are these people?" I hear you cry. My dear! They are simply ignorant paupers, who were Hilda's constant companions through that disastrous summer. Now their mother is dead, and the people with whom Hilda stayed have adopted them. The boy is to be a doctor, and the girl is going to get well.

These, my dear Helen, are Hilda Graham's friends, for whom she has deserted her old ones! For though she is unchanged toward me when I see her, I hardly ever do see her. She cares nothing for my pursuits, and I certainly have no intention of joining in hers. I met her the other day on Fifth Avenue, walking beside that odious bath-chair, which the freckled boy was pushing. She looked so lovely (for she is

prettier than ever, with a fine color and eyes like stars), and was talking so earnestly, and walking somehow as if she were treading on air. It sent a pang through my heart. I just paused an instant (for though I trust I am not snobbish, Helen, still, I draw the line at bath-chairs, and will not be seen standing by one) and said in a low tone, meant only for her ear, "Ah! Has Queen Hildegarde come to this?" My dear, she only laughed! But that girl, that cripple, looked up with a smile and a sort of flash over her face, and said, just as if she knew me, "Yes, Miss Everton! The queen has come to her kingdom!"

The End

